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[AN INCIDENT IN THE SYBIL'S STORY.]

## THE FORTUNE-TELLER OF THE RHINE.

### CHAPTER XIII.

"TWENTY-THREE years ago here, by the Rhine, lived together two orphaned sisters, born of an Italian mother and an English father. They were able to earn all they required for their simple wants by a light and congenial employment. The one embroidered with the needle, the other with the brush, and never were birds or butterflies more gay of voice, more light of heart. Their parents had been so long dead their loss was scarcely known, and it was a sweet thought for them as they knelt together before retiring to their innocent couch, that up in the shining heavens two blessed angels kept guard over their earthly path. They believed it then, in the trustfulness and guilelessness of girlish faith.

"Bitter experience taught them how the blessed ones stoop not down from their songs of praise to the low plains of sinful earth, even to avert the wrongs of the innocent.

"I said they were happy. Ah, me! the word seems too tame and spiritless to express that Eden-like experience. They were all in all to one another—father, mother, sister, lover was each one to the other. Would that it had never been disturbed."

She paused, and lifted her shining eyes to Madame D'Almanoff's face.

The tears were pouring over it.

"You are right, Mercie; it was an Eden," murmured she.

"Aye, and the serpent came," replied the sybil, turning her dark eyes upon the spell-bound baronet.

"A young Englishman, noble in birth, handsome and gallant, and it seemed of a soul grand and knightly enough to adorn his faultless person, came to their simple home. It was for some trivial reason at first; an illuminated book, executed by the sister who used the brush, had met his approbation.

"He wished to procure another to send to a beloved

sister in his English home. It was to be executed from designs of his own, with scenes upon the Rhine. He came constantly, therefore, to overlook the work. Cologne was the frontpiece."

A low murmur from Mrs. Owen startled her.

"My book—the gem my long-lost Guy sent to me."

The sybil smiled meaningly.

"And while one sister worked with her brush under the gentleman's eye, the other sat near, and dainty wreaths of silken blossoms bloomed beneath her skilful needle, and conversation flowed freely and easily, and neither innocent heart dreamed of evil. If there were fault it belonged to the painter, the elder she was, and had taken the lead, having received more of their father's resolute, sturdy independence of spirit than her more delicate and gentle sister. Heaven knows, no hint of the danger ever occurred to her."

A low, quivering sigh shook Madame D'Almanoff's breast, and a thrill in every heart responded; but the speaker went on calmly.

"The book was finished, and yet the visits of the young Englishman did not cease. There were various excuses. Now he brought a rare flower for the embroidress to copy, or a gem of art for the painter's portfolio. Then it was a new poem, and as his richly modulated voice flowed in the melodious measures, the sisters smiled at each other in very ecstasy of joy."

Mrs. Owen's face had grown sadder and sadder.

"Oh, my Guy, after this long silence in the grave, am I to learn that the soul I believed so pure was soiled by the guilt of disturbing innocence like that?" spoke she, quite unaware that her thoughts were expressed aloud.

"He never spoke a disrespectful word, his behaviour would have become the knightliest soul that ever lived. Was it strange, then, these innocent creatures dreamed not of harm? Their minds seemed to expand beneath his touch, they entered loftier domes of thought, grander music flowed into their lives for knowing him, and yet it had been better for them both had they died and never heard his name or seen his face."

"Oh, Guy, Guy!" moaned Mrs. Owen.

The sybil flung to her a grateful glance.

"They grew to watch for his coming. If aught delayed him their smiles faded, their eyes drooped, their hearts sank, and yet neither knew the meaning."

"But they were seldom tried. He seemed as strongly attracted to their simple home as it was glorified by his presence."

"He took them for delicious rides afar into the cool shadows of the country groves. They went dancing down the Rhine with him in his fairy sailing boat. They had sweetly solemn walks by his side, beneath the shining stars and in the silvery effulgence of moonlight. With all things bright and beautiful and grand was he associated to these simple souls, who had no worldly friends to speak warningly, and, as I have said, the angels above bent not down from their songs of praise."

"To one of them came speedily the rude shock which aroused her from the dream of enchantment. He came one day with a glad light shining in his eyes, and bending down to the palette of the painter with his handsome face glowing with eagerness, he said, in his playful way:

"Artist Mercie, I have come to ask something of you; will you give it to me?"

"And she, answered gaily:

"Anything—to the half of my kingdom."

"It is just that, Mercie—the fairest half. I want the tender hand yonder, to call forth with its magical touch just such beautiful flowers, such delicious roses upon the pattern of my life. Will you give to me for my life's angel the dear Hilda yonder, who has owned at last that my fervent love is returned?"

"So hespake. You see, not a word was forgotten. This Mercie—this artist—felt her heart give one wild leap and sink back like a lump of lead; the blood slowly crept like ice through her veins—there was a wild tumult buzzing in her ears. But she was terribly resolute, and proud as a duchess. She forced her stiffening lips to answer, with a sound which counterfeited gladness:

"You shall have her, Guy, with her sister's choicest blessing."

"She heard his joyous thanks, felt his brotherly kiss with the fervent 'Heaven bless my sister Mercie,' and was glad to creep away and leave them to their lovers' bliss. Wildly and fiercely she wrestled with the bitter anguish of her own heart, and she conquered. She returned to them calm and cheerful, but her youth and girliness had dropped away from her for ever.

"Mercie, Mercie, oh, my angel! how could you have concealed it from me all those years?" cried Madame D'Almanoff, seizing the sibyl's hand.

She smiled proudly.

"It was better so, Hilda; to-day I am no longer ashamed of it."

There were other tears than those on Madame D'Almanoff's cheek, but Sir Morton still sat grimly stern and pale, with glassy, unwinking eyes fixed on the speaker's face.

"It was here, the chief, the only fault of Mercie lay. She was so wretched with her own struggles she gave no thought to her sister's welfare. She made no inquiries, she avoided the lovers as much as was possible, and wandered restlessly away from her home. She might have made sure of all the circumstances; since she was the elder and the stronger it was clearly her duty. But she did not. She encouraged the speedy marriage—that she hoped might then ease her pain. Sir Guy spoke lightly of his English ties. There was no one to hinder or gainay his movements, he said. He would take his beautiful foreign rose to the friends at home all unexpectedly, that they might be the more surprised and delighted.

"Unsuspecting in the world's hardness and selfishness, neither of these sisters thought it strange that an English baronet was willing to marry a portionless maiden of the Rhine. He loved her, she was good, and true, and beautiful; there was nothing strange in it to Mercie.

"Well, the union took place—"

Sir Morton started up, and then fell back again with a wintry smile.

"I will hear you out," muttered he.

"It were wiser," replied she.

"A happy three months followed. They travelled awhile in Italy, wonderfully beautiful experiences dawned upon them, I doubt not—and then they came back to Mercie. They had come for a farewell visit to Mercie, and then were to leave for England.

"But they had been with her but a single day when Guy drooped and complained of a fiery thirst, and a fierce pain in his head. His cheeks grew hot beneath the fever flush, and his eyes became wild with delirium.

"He had somehow imbibed the malarial of a deadly fever. Can I depict the anguish of the wife, the horror and grief of the sister? No, no, leave it untold. He had found an English relative at Rome, who travelled with them to Cologne.

"This man tended him faithfully, was with him at Guy's request, alone, in the brief hour before his death when he rallied from delirium and knew the fate upon him.

"He died—Sir Guy Mordaunt died!"

Her voice checked, and she dashed her hand swiftly across her eyes.

None others except Sir Morton's were clear from blinding tears, while Mrs. Owen and Madame D'Almanoff sobbed aloud.

"It was a awful, awful time. It seemed there could be no farther misery, and yet the blow which fell made that of death seem blessed.

"This English relative, this cousin, came to Mercie after the funeral, with a strangely disturbed face; deeply embarrassed, too, so that she was long in gathering his meaning from his stumbling sentences—his cautious hints—his half avowals. When it came she reeled beneath the shock.

"The pure, the noble, the knightly Guy, he who had just been set up by their fond belief among the saints in the white light of heaven, was a villain, a perjured wretch, a base deceiver.

"He said he was deeply distressed; his indignation at his cousin's conduct overpowered him; but he was powerless to save us from the misery. It was a great misfortune that we had had no father to investigate the proceedings.

"The marriage had been a mere sham. Guy had explained to him how he cheated us, and begged him to atone to us by a regular pension. Much more he said, but I cannot explain it all, for you all know it as well as I. It was the grief of a shocked and virtuous mind powerless to save us from the ruin threatening.

"At first we indignantly refused to believe the atrocious story. My sister, with an energy I had not believed left, from her overpowering grief, how to obtain proofs.

"The marriage certificate was gone, all the necessary papers were lacking. She remembered how carefully Guy had gathered them together, and I saw her cheek blanch.

"Next we sought the English clergyman who had

performed the ceremony. No one knew anything about such a man, he was not to be found. We came home and sat down dumb, staring into each other's faces. We could doubt no longer, I knew, when Hilda gave up her last hope.

"She fell suddenly into my arms, and in a voice which chilled my blood as if it had been spoken through rows of buried coffins, cried out:

"Oh, Mercie, my poor nameless, unborn child!"

"I took her in my arms, and kissed her frantically. 'I will be its father, Hilda; it shall never want for love or tenderness; it shall never lack comforts while these hands of mine can earn a single coin. Let us be courageous, and defy this cruel fate.'

"We spurned the offered money, though we had no ill feelings towards this cousin, who seemed to feel so keenly for our disgrace and suffering. And he went away and left us.

"The child we thought to be such a heavy grief was our chief blessing. Beside the mother's couch I fell down and took my solemn vow to take the guilty father's place, and, if opportunity ever came, to gain for it the rights, by the laws of heaven if not of earth, it could surely claim. I took a new vocation. The sight of the brush made me sick. It was too full of Guy's memory. My bitterness of heart—my sternness of will came to my help. I became the Fortune-teller of the Rhine. Natural shrewdness and quickness aided me wonderfully. It was my most lucrative employment, and I was able to keep a well-furnished home for my sister and her child.

"The years rolled on, the child grew in beauty and filled our hearts with their sole joy. Yet all the while the terrible bitterness of my shattered faith in any human goodness rankled in my heart.

"One day, accidentally, I came upon an English paper. I learned in it that the pitying cousin had become Guy's successor, wore his title, owned his estate. It sent a wild suspicion like an electric shock through my brain. I kept it from Hilda, it would have been pitiless cruelty to have told it without a word of proof, but I gloated over it—I fed upon it—I grew convinced that it was true. I was no longer an innocent, unsuspecting girl. I was a soured, distrustful woman. I could believe wicked deeds of anyone. I sent an agent to England to spy his movements, his actions, and the accounts I received confirmed my suspicions.

"The new baronet was a strange man—restless, excitable; he always seemed as if a ghost were dodging his steps.

"So answered my spy. I did not doubt it. A ghost was always with him.

Sir Morton shuddered.

"I went myself to England. In a dozen different disguises I dogged his steps. I even bribed a servant to allow me to search his papers through. All in vain, and, sullen and discontented, I returned home. My task seemed hopeless—I relinquished it for eighteen years. Six months ago I took it up again.

"Our child had grown to womanhood. There was another way she might gain her rights and her father's name. I myself sent to Guy, yonder, that fascinating treatise upon the Rhine. I was confident it would draw him hither. For the rest I trusted my fortune-telling powers. Providence aided me beyond my wildest hopes, when at last you all came to the Rhine. I had patiently followed your course from the moment of leaving the English shore. I was ready for you on the steamer, as you know. Little enough did I dream of the afterpiece which followed when I left the wharf, and my precious one remained upon the boat, all unsuspecting of the hope I held that Guy would see her face among the crowd, and be attracted towards it. The Rhine did better than I could have planned."

She spoke these words emphatically—only Guy and his Undine understood the hidden meaning.

"Well, what more shall I say? Only this, Sir Morton Mordaunt; for years I suspected the base lie you framed, the hideous wrong you put upon a dead man's fair fame, but it was only suspicion. To-day I can do better; I can prove it."

Sir Morton leaped to his feet. One hand was pressed against the packet suspended to his neck.

"I defy you!" shouted he; "you have no proofs!"

"Pause, sinful man. Have you not already tasted the bitter fruits of guilt? Will you hug the gnawing foe to your breast a little longer?"

That cold, glittering smile played lightly across her face as she added:

"You think you have the papers safe? Have you examined them since your illness? The fortune-teller has learned many arts. She is a nurse, when it suits her. She watched your delicious bed faithfully, but she obtained her reward. She removed the precious certificates of her sister's marriage, the legitimacy of her child, and the blessed proof of Guy's truth. The paper signed by his dying hand, proclaiming to his friends the sacredness and legality of his marriage was among them. I marvelled that you had not destroyed them, until by your delirious ravings I

learned that poor Guy with his last breath left his curse to anyone who should harm them. Your superstitious fear has been our safety. To all present here I declare the true heir, the rightful owner of Mordaunt Cliff, is Irena Mordaunt, Sir Guy Mordaunt's lawful daughter."

Sir Mordaunt sprang to his feet once more, tore frantically the packet from its chain, and with a groan of despair dropped back again.

The fortune-teller bounded to his side.

"Peace, man, you are safe. We cannot curse you who are the father of Guy, who will be the husband of Irena. Are you so dull you cannot see the safe and joyful issue?"

"And you will not expose me?"

"Certainly not, nor hate you. Since fate has ordered such a happy adjustment of the united claims. What matter if it be Sir Guy or Irena who owns the Cliff, if the marriage vows have made them one?"

The tears came pouring over Sir Morton's ashy cheeks.

"Oh, I am a guilty wretch, I do not deserve it. But the temptation was terribly powerful. I was poor, already married, and with no hopes of advancement. This foreign wife, I reasoned, would be extremely unwelcome to the friends. She was as well here as there. And Guy himself suggested the thought when he put the proofs of the marriage in my hand and bade me see that no one tried to dispute their claim. Heaven forgive me! but for my son's sake, I should long ago have confessed all. Heaven pardon me!"

"Amen!" said the fortune-teller, solemnly.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

MADAME D'ALMANOFF at her sister's final words glanced around upon the intent and agitated faces of the group. She read there conviction of the truth of the triumphant assertion that there was proof of the legality of her marriage, of her husband's truth, her daughter's legitimacy.

The sudden joy was too overwhelming. She made a feeble effort to draw Irena to her arms—Irena who stood there, proud, joyous, triumphant—and fell back fainting.

They carried her tenderly to her room. Her first roving glance fell upon Mrs. Owen's tear-stained face bending affectionately over her.

"My sister, my precious sister, my darling Guy's beloved wife," said Mrs. Owen, tremulously.

The trembling arms were thrown eagerly around her neck.

"Oh, how can I be grateful enough? Most of all that his memory is cleared from stain. I could not hate him when I believed him my destroyer. Oh, picture my joy that I know him to be as true as my fondest belief in the earliest days of our acquaintance!"

"My poor, poor sister! how cruelly you have suffered; no wonder my heart was drawn so powerfully towards you. I cannot express my abhorrence and anger at Sir Morton's conduct."

"Forgive him, as I now joyfully do, as my noble Mercie has done already. Where is she? Bring her to me—my more than sister, my protector, my mother and father, and husband, and friend, all in one."

The fortune-teller had heard every word. She sprang forward with a smothered sob, and the two were clasped in each other's arms, while the tears rained over their quivering faces.

"My poor, poor Mercie, and you loved him without my ever dreaming of it. You have suffered more than I, with none of my bliss."

"Nay, Hilda, am I not thrice blessed this very moment? Is it not worth all my toiling and suffering? I am too happy. I ask no more."

And there were other very joyous faces in the room beyond.

There was Ralph shaking everybody by the hand in the exuberance of his delight, and as he believed very silly drawing Edith behind the deep drapery of the bay window to kiss her triumphantly first upon one cheek and then upon the other.

"Oh, Edie, darling, she is a glorious creature, that fortune-teller. She has brought us safely from the Slough of Despond to the Mountains of Delight. I am so happy. I can't find it in my heart to be angry even with poor Sir Morton."

"I'm very glad you've retracted your late atrocious slander, Master Ralph," was Edith's merry response. "She's no longer a 'confounded old woman,' this queen of fortune-tellers. I shall tell her about it some day."

"At peril of your—lips, Miss Edith," vociferated Ralph, as Edith bounded away.

She stumbled upon a more sedate pair. Guy was standing by Irena's side in the little recess of the sitting-room, and his face was very grave.

"Lady Irena," said he, sorrowfully, "I give you back the promise only this day received from you. It is not meet that the son of him who has wronged you so foully should be honoured by your favour. I



need not, I am certain, assure you that all this is utterly new to me, that I would have cut off my right hand sooner than have taken from you the smallest title of your right. I have not a word to say for my wretched, my unhappy father. I believed it was as he says, a temptation from the Evil One himself. May all good fortune await you and follow your steps. I dare not trust myself to say more."

He was turning away with a quivering lip, when Irena stretched forth her white hand and arrested him.

"Guy," said she, in a low, thrilling voice, "and so from a false caprice of pride you will put away the Undine the Rhine gave to your arms? Oh, Guy, Guy, do you not know that fortune and name, and honour, ay, even my mother's fair fame and my father's honourable memory, were powerless to give me happiness if I lost you? Guy, can you give generously, as but late before the magic mirror you promised, when you sought a portionless and nameless bride, and yet will you not allow the same privilege to me? Is your love not stronger than your pride? Oh, my Guy, take me to your arms that my overflowing heart may find peace and rest. The waves united us. I will not be put away, for I love you, Guy, better than all the world beside."

The dark eyes beamed gloriously through their sparkling tears, the sweet lips smiled pleadingly. How could Guy resist?

With a fervent blessing upon his generous love he folded her to his heart.

He went not long afterwards to his father, sent thither, as he declared, with an angel's soothing message.

Peter was assiduously at work over him, but he withdrew respectfully as Guy came. The worthy fellow was not so stupid but he was aware of the strange agitation in the house.

The haggard, wretched face, so wan and worn, lying on the pillow, could not fail to touch the son's heart.

"Dear father," began he, and broke down.

"What!" exclaimed Sir Morton, tremulously, "and do none, not even you, reproach me? Oh, Guy, my own conscience is heaping coals of fire upon my head! Where shall I find rest from my own remorse? My son, forgive me, and pray that heaven may at length have mercy also."

"I bring you Irena's tender assurance of future love and care."

"What, his daughter! Guy's daughter love her usurper, her mother's enemy, her father's detractor? It is impossible, Guy."

"She bade me say it, it was her voluntary message. Oh, my father, make your peace with heaven. All here are too happy to have any bitter resentments."

Sir Morton wept silently.

At length, reaching for his son's hand, he said, humbly:

"I am glad it is so, for your sake, Guy; you deserve it. For myself, I could almost welcome their reviling as if it might ease my own tormenting remorse."

He was so thoroughly humbled and penitent, the keenest shame was lifted away from Guy, and when, as they presently became aware, they learned from the physician his attack had left him with an incurable malady which would keep him a close invalid the rest of his days, all indignation merged into pity and sympathy for the meek resignation which accepted his sharp trials of pain as a deserved punishment.

The whole party returned to Mordaunt Cliff in triumph.

The story Sir Morton insisted should be made public excited a momentary ripple in the circle around them.

But it soon faded away, and when the grand festival took place at Mordaunt Cliff which celebrated the marriage of the two happy friends, Sir Guy Mordaunt and Colonel Ralph Owen, no one remembered the peculiar circumstances attending the engagement of Edith to her cousin, or recalled the fact that a little time past such a person as "the lovely and fascinating Lady Irena," as the journals styled her when they announced the grand marriages, was entirely unknown among them.

Very lovely and very joyous-looking were the two brides in their snowy robes of costly satin, and lace, and velvet, and if there were varying criticisms and disputes concerning the palm of beauty claimed for either, it was settled by the very quiet declaration of a tall, distinguished-looking lady, dressed in a rich black velvet dress, with a singular but most becoming head-dress of folds of vivid scarlet velvet arranged something after the fashion of a hood, and clasped with a chain of jet—a lady, by the way, who only claimed acquaintance with the family party.

"It is very difficult indeed, Mrs. Owen," said the lady, with a smile, "to say which is the lovelier. It all depends upon the gazer's taste. Blue eyes for Ralph, beyond a question—that you know was settled

long ago. And Sir Guy will never, I am sure, venture to admit there is beauty for him in anything but the lustrous black eye promised him by the Rhine."

The bridal party caught the words.

"Ah, Aunt Mercie, that is a very ally speech of yours, but we have heard it all," laughed Miss Edith, leaning proudly on the gallant colonel's arm. "It is very true that the whole of the mischief accomplished at this wedding must be attributed to that weird, uncanny creature who has vanished so mysteriously from Cologne, the Fortune-teller of the Rhine."

"Heaven bless her!" said Guy, fervently, and his fair young wife turned and lifted her tender eyes suffused with tears.

"Yes, dear, dear Aunt Mercie, heaven bless you. Our fête would be sad indeed without your presence, you to whom we all owe our happiness."

"You are silly children all of you," replied the lady, trying to hide her emotion at those grateful, earnest words and tender, loving looks.

"I must go and find what my sedate sister is about. I saw her coaxing Sir Morton to take a peep at your very pretty brides, but I fancy his eyes were too dim for seeing much. Go you and speak to him. He will not be ungrateful for the courtesy. Ah, there is Peter. What do you think he has been telling me to-night? He declares that if I would put on a gray gown and cap, and wear blue spectacles he should think I was a horribly meddlesome old woman, who pretended to nurse his master off in 'forrin parts.'"

Mrs. Owen made her way to the speaker with the Dowager Lady Mordaunt on her arm.

"We are talking about you, Mercie," said she; "we are saying what a glorious issue this must seem to you for the patient, skilful, unceasing work of those dreary eighteen years."

She smiled dreamily.

"Nothing, my friends," answered she, solemnly, "can exceed the first joy of the discovery. That repaid me for all. My faith in honour, and goodness, and manliness was given back to me. My saint was restored to his place in the shining lights of heaven. Guy was all that my sister loved and trusted, that I admired and honoured. I asked no more. The rest is the generous measure pressed down and running over."

There was a moment's thoughtful silence.

"And, Mercie, you will promise to remain with us? You will not return to Cologne as you have threatened?"

"Why should I stay—who will need me?" was the tremulous question.

"Crush Mercie, are you not my all? are we not inseparable still?" demanded her sister, vehemently. "You have earned a place beyond a sister's, near and dear as husband or child. When both have left me you will still remain. We have lived together in closest affection, let us die side by side, near the grave of Guy."

Mercie reached forth her hand impulsively.

"You have conquered, Hilda. I will remain. Your people shall be my people, your home mine."

"Who is talking so solemnly upon this joyful evening?" demanded Guy, returning from his father's seat; "of course you will remain. Dare to think of such a preposterous act as leaving the Cliff, and we will have out a warrant to arrest you for an impostor, a cheat, deceiving credulous people with your cunning reflecting mirrors, your weird warnings, your wonderful predictions. Fortune-tellers are prohibited, you know, in these days."

"At least!" exclaimed Edith, gaily, "use your last expiring gleam of prophetic sight to read me a riddle. This sphinx will not explain to my curious questioning his odd name for our darling Irena. Tell us, Aunt Mercie, why is she Undine, and wherefore does that provoking look of understanding pass between them whenever the name is mentioned?"

"I will retire grandly, I think," replied Mercie; "I will use my last ray of light to solve the important mystery."

"Know, then, most curious bride, that while it was a spray of gorse and a magic mirror which showed to a pair of blue eyes the very good-looking face of to-night's bridegroom, it was the Rhine itself which gave to Guy his first glimpse of his future destiny. The waves tossed into his arms the fairy semblance of the lady-love who was to crown him on this joyful evening with the blessings of her love and hand."

"Like Undine, she came to him from the waves. You have heard the solution. Behold now the exit of the Fortune-teller of the Rhine!"

She smiled half in melancholy, half in cheerful acceptance of the changed life before her, and turned away from the gay voices and brilliant scene of the bridal festival.

Her sister followed, well knowing whither those dreamy steps were turning.

Softly and silently down the fir-guarded avenue,

across the shadowy park, belted with a girdle of bridal lights, which were thrusting forth their tongues of lambent whiteness through the clustering leaves of the grand old trees, away to the dim grounds where rose upward in the pale starlight the slanting marble spires of the Mordaunt mausoleum, passed the stately figure, and Sir Guy's widow followed solemnly.

A wreath of white roses, the petals glittering with dewdrops, showed in the starlight hanging over the tablet bearing the honoured and beloved name.

Young Sir Guy and his bride had brought thither in tender remembrance of the unknown father whose memory was held in such fervid reverence and love by his surviving friends.

Mercie paused, and with crossed arms and bowed head stood silently before it.

"My brother Guy," murmured she, at length, "can you look down from your blissful height and see the solemn thanksgivings which fill my heart? Can you know that the fierce spirit of Mercie is at peace with all living experience and past memories? Can you crown her with your brotherly benediction, she who has saved your loved ones from wrong and shame?"

Hilda came swiftly forward, and flung her arms around the beloved figure.

"Doubt it not, oh, my Mercie. Such a shining light as that of our beloved one is never quenched, it beams on gloriously above, ay, even here, earth is Guy's pure spirit still at work. See how his influence still moulds the hearts of these dear children who have gazed upon his living face? Ah, Mercie, I can acquiesce submissively now in the early death which seemed so untimely a blight upon noble promise. Who would ask for a more worthy work than his, brief as his day of life might be?"

"It is well, Hilda; I had come to own it here. Well, too, the fiery pang through which this heart of mine has passed. So is gold purified, so have I cast aside the dross that might have held me captive in earth's sinful paths. I can rejoice now, my Hilda, that Guy chose the sweetest and dearest sister. Understand me, love, the fervent affection which cherishes his memory so fondly is such that I can stand before his tomb here and declare, belongs justly and only to a noble and sainted brother."

With interlacing arms, serenely calm eyes, and peaceful hearts, the two women returned slowly from the dim, melancholy cemetery to the illuminated lawn.

They left behind them the black shadows and sombre hues, and the white lustre of the wedding lights flung over them a radiant shower of cheerful brightness, and at the same moment gay, loving voices called:

"Loiterers, return! the feast waits for your presence."

It was a symbol of their future lives.

M. T. C.

By a recent submarine convulsion, the well-known rock, La Marola, opposite Corunna, has disappeared. And between the rocks surrounding Fort St. Antonio, a creek has been formed capable of containing about a dozen fishing-smacks.

MR. PARIS, who has been some time experimenting on the means for bringing South American beef to England, declares the problem solved, and that it can now be supplied in perfect condition and in unlimited quantities at from 4d. to 5d. a pound.

IN Brazil a bird identical with our water-hen (*Gallinula chloropus*), is kept for the purpose of eating up the cockroaches and other insects so troublesome to the inhabitants. This bird makes a capital and amusing domestic pet.

A FIRM of Scotch warehousemen in London have in their employ a knitter who has discovered the art of knitting two stockings at one time on the same pins. When finished, the stockings are drawn away from each other.

THE death is announced of Mr. David Ramsay Hay, in his sixty-eighth year. The deceased was the author of many able works on decoration, and on the principles of form and colour applicable to various branches of art.

TWO children named Bryan—one a girl, aged eight years, and the other a boy, aged three years and six months—were each sent to prison by the Dublin magistrates for fourteen days, with hard labour, for begging!

It is stated that the salt mines of Nevada throw in the shade all others known. One bed is reported to cover 52,930 acres, yielding 2,000,000 bushels annually of salt, ninety-five per cent. fine. No bottom to this salt bed has ever been discovered. As deep as any work has gone, the bed is solid rock salt, and from a depth of thirty-five feet the salt water comes so rapidly as to prevent work without efficient working arrangements. The salt water wells up to the surface

and overflows the large floor from which the fine white salt is continually gathered. This floor, several acres in area, has been so well levelled that the water flows evenly over it, and this, by exposure to the atmosphere, is rapidly evaporated, leaving a stratum of fine salt. This yield and production go on continually, and the more rapidly it is removed the better the quality of the salt.

### THE TERROR OF A LIFETIME.

NEVER had the bright blossoms of hope been showered around a betrothal of more promise than that of Maude Livingston. Her accepted was both a man and a gentleman in the strictest meaning of the term. Beauty, too, had dowered both; she with rippling tresses of the deepest auburn; eyes so very blue that a shadow changed them almost to hazel, and puzzled the beholder; a complexion of the purest white, through which the tell-tale blood curdled in roseate blushes; nose as daintily carved as ever sculptor dreamed of, and a small mouth whose coral-cleft lips revealed a line of regular and dazzlingly white pearls within. And yet there was an expression about those little lips that betokened a firm will if the heart should ever be called upon to battle for the right; an expression such as has carried heroes through the whirlwind of battle and made martyrs die triumphantly and with songs of rejoicing at the fogot-surrounded stake.

For him, if he were the opposite in his strongly sinewed form, in his eagle eye, in his crisp black and straight hair and somewhat strangely marked features, he was still gifted far more than is usually the case with manly beauty—was just such a one as a true-hearted woman would look up to and lean upon—just the human oak around which the more tender human ivy would clasp its tendrils lovingly and cling to, even though want and shame should come, to the bitter end.

But there could be no fear of this for them. Education and wealth forbade them even the thought of such a future, and when the soft moon shimmered through the interstices of the cherry-trees and made the ripened fruit glitter like globes of blood, they fell upon as true a heart-plighting as was ever seen upon earth.

Yet the next night they met again, and how all was changed! Sunlight, starlight, all of hope and joy was banished from their young hearts, and dense darkness reigned alone and triumphant there.

A few short hours and the trail of the serpent was over all the love flowers, and the poison was distributed into every bud of glorious promise.

"Good heavens, Maude!" was the exclamation of her lover, as he came to the very spot that had thrilled with their words of endearment, and saw how ghastly was her face. "What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

The accent was firm, although the words came from trembling lips—lips now robbed of their coral hue and wearing almost the ashy one of death.

"But something is the matter," he replied, as he sat down by her side and stretched out her arms to clasp her to him.

"Did I not say 'Nothing'?" and she repulsed his caresses, and moved farther away.

"Maude, darling, I will not be put off in this manner. Something, something terrible is the matter, and I have a right to know what it is."

"You know all that you ever will, except one thing."

"Are you mad, Maude, that you talk thus?"

"Mad? Oh, heaven! I fear that I soon shall be. Oh! that I could die—die!"

"But tell me what is the matter. Something far more than common must have driven you to a state of feeling like this."

"Yes, something has happened, something more than terrible," and she repeated the words as if weighing well their importance. "Something that you will never know—that none but heaven and Doctor Malcom will ever even dream of until the grass is growing green above me."

"Maude, Maude, this is terrible! You will not—you cannot—keep this secret from me."

"I must, and will. My life—my whole life—is blasted. But as heaven is your judge, think no evil of me, for I am innocent in thought, word, or deed of anything wrong. But yours I shall not be."

"Maude, I will not listen to such words. You shall tell me this secret that is crushing you to the earth. Think of last night, of the promise you made in the sight, as it were, of heaven, and refuse me if you can."

"That spell is broken—that promise is void," she answered, with a sigh that was more like the wailing of a broken harp-string when suddenly struck by a careless hand, than a human voice. "Yes, that dream is broken. Happiness and I are strangers

henceforth and for ever. Here is your ring—take it. It shall never rest upon finger of mine again. With its parting I take back all that I have ever promised. I cannot, will not be your wife."

"Not my wife! Now I know that you are mad indeed."

"No; you wrong me. If you only knew all you would not judge me thus harshly."

"Maude, Maude, what am I to think? You are suffering, suffering far beyond your nature to bear, and yet deny me the poor consolation of sharing your sorrow—of attempting to lighten your burden."

"You must think what you will, only no wrong of me; I have not the power of altering it. As I have already said, when the grave closes over me you will learn all; but until then, nothing."

"Then you never loved me?"

"Never loved you? Great heaven! I have never loved you half as wildly and deeply as at this moment."

"Then take back this ring and tell me all."

"Never! You know not what you ask."

An hour of vain effort—an hour of entreaty, urged by eloquence and intensified by love, satisfied him that she, so gentle and yielding to him before, had become iron in this.

She would not renew her troth—would not take again the engagement ring, and he bowed his head upon his hands, and strong man as he was, wept like a child.

"But one thing, Maude, my darling," he resumed, after a long pause of bitter thought. "Tell me if there be no way in which I can help you; if not as a lover, at least as a man."

"No, none; but there is a favour I would ask of you," and she looked up pleadingly with her own eyes streaming with tears.

"Name it. Anything that man can do shall be done."

"It is but little. Never seek me again until I send for you. Will you promise me that?"

"If you will promise to call upon me as a brother when I can be of even the most trifling assistance."

"I promise, before heaven!"

"And may heaven not deal lightly with the one who first ignores the compact. But is there no simple thing that I can do for you before I go?"

"None. One word might reveal all. My trust is in heaven—heaven and Doctor Malcom."

"Doctor Malcom," he repeated, almost savagely.

"Doctor Malcom? By heaven, he shall tell me!" and he clasped her in his strong arms, kissed her warmly before she had time to resist, and darted away, determined to find the physician and force the secret from him.

But he calculated without his host. Dr. Malcom was not the kind of man to divulge confidences, even if lightly made, and much less so when it was one of vital importance, and so the half-distracted lover flew to the mother for information—and met with a like success. The poor, afflicted mother wrung her hands and wept bitterly, but had nothing to tell. The secret had been kept from her as well as him. Not even she had been taken into her daughter's confidence.

And so long, weary weeks passed away, with Maude Livingston constantly growing more feeble. All of beauty was fading from her face. The fair face was becoming sallow and wrinkled; the bright eyes were losing their glorious azure; the lips were drawing back, shrivelled and shrunken, from the snowy teeth, and the very hair seemed to be burned from the very roots from some fire of the brain. Ah! that terrible secret was fast, very fast bearing her down to the grave.

But still she dragged herself day after day to the house of the physician. Dragged, for the sprightly walk had changed into the movements of an old woman.

And her lover was but little better off. He, too, grew thin, and was almost heart-broken. Terrible as was the effort, he kept from Maude, and if they chanced to meet, he turned his gaze away that he might not see what a very wreck she had become. Every strategy he had tried had failed. He could entrap neither her nor the doctor into a divulgement. And thus he was forced to bide the time when she should call him again to her side.

But what could that fatal, terrible secret be? He thought of everything possible except those that would reflect upon her. To his honour, be it said, he never thought—never allowed anyone to speak of her except in terms of the highest praise. To him she had been, and would ever be, pure as an angel until she was one in reality.

Six weeks—three months—a year passed, and yet there was no change, except that she had wasted to a shadow; that she no longer was seen abroad; that her glorious voice was hushed in the choir, and her once merry laugh had dwindled away into the very ghost of an echo. Yet still there was no revelation,

still no one was the wiser as to the cause of her illness.

"Great heaven! will this suspense—this almost mortal agony never end?" said the disconsolate lover, as he returned home one evening, after having, by accident, caught sight of the face he loved so well, for the first time in months—months that had been agony, and yet during which his love had suffered no abatement. "Is there no power to save her? Oh, that I could know the worst, and at once! Certainly, it could not be as terrible as this uncertainty. I must—must know. I cannot live any longer thus. She, my Maude, my darling, will not see me, and I have promised not to molest her; but the doctor, the doctor! I'll wring the secret from his very heart!"

But, fortunately perhaps, he was saved from his rash determination by the arrival of a messenger from Maude, and with flying feet he hastened to her side.

"Maude, my darling, my darling!" was all he could exclaim, as he sank by the bed upon which she was lying, whiter than even the snowy linen.

"Robert!" and the shrunken arms drew his head nearer to her, and her lips rested upon the forehead in a holy kiss.

Not such a one as had passed when the sweet words of the betrothal were spoken, but such a one as we shall receive from the spirit lips of angels when they welcome us to the "shining shore."

Father, mother, sisters and the physician were gathered around that bed, which all felt would soon be one of death—not death from the secret millstone that had so long crushed her heart, but from natural causes—from one of the thousand ills that poor human nature is subject to.

"Is there no hope?" Maude asked, as soon as she could command her feelings.

"None," replied the physician, sadly, as he turned away to wipe his eyes.

"As heaven wills. But now I release you from silence. You can tell all. Tell him how much I loved him. Tell him how I have suffered these long months, and all for his dear sake."

And the doctor did tell all. He told that on the night of their betrothal she had been bitten by a rabid dog, and believing that she would die from the terrible disease that would follow, she had nerved herself to keep the secret—to free him from his engagement, and had suffered more than tongue can tell. "And if you had lived, you would still have kept silence?" asked her lover.

"To the end. But all is past now. The sickness, fatal though it may be, has brought great happiness. Kiss me, Robert, darling, I am dying—dy—"

"Hush!"

With startling emphasis the physician uttered the word. He saw that a great change was taking place, and it was not death, but life.

Again the cherries hung quivering like blood drops among the green leaves, and the soft moonlight flashed like silver fire between. And again it shines upon Maude Livingston and her lover husband.

The past has vanished like some distempered dream, and in a few short months, when the roses shall blossom fully again upon her cheeks, no one will ever dream that she so nearly journeyed through the dark valley of the shadow of death, to prove the trials and the triumphs of love, and gain a lifelong happiness. W. H. B.

THE old town of Cologne is likely to become the favourite Rhenish residence of Sir John Barleycorn. No less than 118 breweries are now in full activity there. They consumed 80,577 cwt. of malt during 1865.

DR. COQUEREL, a French naval surgeon, has published a curious article on the fatal results experienced, both in Mexico and in Guiana, from a species of fly, which deposits its eggs inside the human nostrils. Several soldiers have died of the consequences.

THE Assizes held at Oxford in 1577 were called the "Black Assizes," from the horrible catastrophe produced on that occasion by the jail fever, brought into the court by a prisoner. Baker, in his "Chronicle," tells us that all who were present in court died in forty-eight hours: the judge, the sheriff, and 300 other persons.

THE saddle trade of Birmingham and Walsall produces by export trade alone £400,000 per year. Scotland sends the best pig skin. England and Wales prefer the skin in the form of cracking. A good idea of the extent of our imported leather may be gathered from the fact that three million hides are returned for the year 1864. There are 1,500 people actually employed at this trade, and the wages from 25s. to 60s. per week—perhaps the average of the weekly earnings will be 40s.





[THE ESCAPE.]

## THE WRONG DRESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Golden Mask," "The Stranger's Secret," "Man and His Idol," "The Warning Voice," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER XLIX.

VICE ITS OWN REWARD.

Not virtue only reaps the seed  
Its secret deeds have sown,  
Vice also has its harvest time—  
A harvest all its own.

anon.

OLIVER'S appearance at Gasparo's house had been brought about in this way.

The announcement of his intention to abandon the character he had undertaken to assume as the young heir of Gorewood Place had naturally created the utmost consternation in the mind of Sir Anselm and Lady Gower. Immediately on Oliver's recovery from the fever which prostrated him for some days, a piteous, nay, a pitiable scene had ensued, in which they had knelt to him—they, the haughty, high-born aristocrats to this felon outcast—and entreated him to save them from exposure, disgrace, and ruin.

Touched at their abject misery, he had yielded thus far—he had consented to keep their secret, and to take no steps which might compromise them, at least till Jacintha's return to Gorewood Place.

"But," he had added, "hope nothing from her cunning, or sagacity, in the way of persuasion. No inducements and no threats will affect me, or turn me from my settled purpose, that of returning as speedily as possible to independence, and the consciousness of rectitude and innocence. The chance encounter with your cast-off menial but a few nights since shows me that the path of wrong is beset with peril and with perpetual apprehensions fatal to happiness. That path, then, is not mine, and there is no mortal power that shall induce me to walk in it."

I have often pictured my noble Oliver as he must have looked in the utterance of these simple words. That fair brow, those bright, glistening eyes, must have glowed with angelic light, and it is certain that those who listened to him made no effort to thwart his purpose—they felt that it would be impossible.

The day or two succeeding this interview passed most wretchedly at the Court. Oliver absented himself as much as possible, taking long rambles in the woods, or by the river's side, and abstaining in every way from intruding on those to whom his presence could only be a source of disgust.

One gratifying incident, and only one, occurred. Vivian Gower and his wife—the discomfited rivals—withdraw from the scene of their defeat. That Oliver was really Sir Anselm's son they never for one moment believed. That treachery had been at work somewhere they were convinced; but so far it was impossible for them to point out the means that had been used, more especially in the face of this fact, that Oliver had unmistakably the Gower face, marked distinctly and not to be questioned.

How that happened they hoped in time to discover—not doubting but that with the discovery would come the solution of the mystery that would restore them to rank and fortune.

But for the present there seemed no chance of this, and their only course was to quit the field of their defeat.

The intense relief their absence afforded is hardly to be expressed; coupled with Jacintha's promised speedy return, it gave Sir Anselm and his unhappy wife a feeling almost approaching happiness.

Oliver also shared this feeling, for he knew the source of the danger to which they were exposed, and there were "compunctious visitings" in his heart when he reflected that while a straightforward course was the only one open to him attended with any chance of happiness, it might not be altogether right that he should, by his determination, bring greater trouble and confusion on those who had a sort of claim on him, even in the wrong course they were pursuing.

This consideration, indeed, weighed heavily upon him in those rambles in the woods and by the river side to which I have referred.

It was his misery to feel what so many beside him have discovered, namely, the extreme difficulty of retracing a false step. It is so easy to take one. By-paths opening out of the open road of right and just principles present themselves so temptingly! We see them, looking bright and green, and we say, "Here is a short cut that leads the same way; let us quit the high road that is hard and dry and dusty, and pursue these devious ways over the greensward and among the flowers that are so fragrant, and the birds whose delicious notes fill the air with music!" Easily said, and the first step is as easily taken; but we are not long in finding out that the tempting by-path of falsehood, or dishonesty, or worse, does not run parallel with the highway of honour and virtue. And then the difficulty of getting back; the enormous difficulty of finding the one road that makes return possible.

Day after day Oliver thought over this, and put the difficulties of his position in this way.

"If I persist in this personation I lose my own happiness and self-respect, and inflict a positive wrong on those whom I am helping to keep out of their rights; if, on the other hand, I abandon my post, I do not leave those who have placed confidence in me as I found them. Their position is worse—it is almost desperate, since no second person can be put forward as the heir of Gorewood, and my absolute disappearance is their only remedy. True, they had no right to put themselves in this position; but having done so—well, well, I must make the only reparation in my power. I must leave these parts, this country, indeed, and bury myself and my identity on some foreign shore, among the wilds of Africa, or in the primeval forests of Australasia."

This was the determination working in his mind when, by some fortunate chance, he encountered the gay but disconsolate Tadge.

The meeting was a source of mutual pleasure.

Tadge was, as usual, dressed in all the colours of the rainbow; but her eyes had lost the sparkle, and her face the radiance of a few weeks since.

Eager to make him a confidant of her sorrows, she at once explained to Oliver the cause of her depression.

First, her mind was far from being at rest in regard to Violet Malden. A few days after her singular disappearance she had received a letter in her mistress's hand, assuring her of her safety and giving certain directions; but this bore no address, nor did any postmark appear on the envelope. That was mysterious and unsatisfactory, as both agreed; there did not appear to be any motive for such secrecy and diplomacy, and poor Tadge had wearied her brain with trying to account for it.

"Tain't," she argued, "as if that ruffian—that lawyer chap, Jasper Newton, as is as mad as a March 'air—was at loose to molesque her. Bless you, no! He's took, as is well bekknown to you as well as me. And as I say, what's it all mean? Then there's poor Julia, where's she? What's to account for her going away without a word? Is she with my poor dear pet, or isn't she? And where are they, or where ain't they? as I say,—bless their hearts!"

Oliver had no answer to make—no comfort to give. My absence had been a source of deep mental anguish to him, because he knew how much was at stake in respect to me, and he had an intimate knowledge—no one better—of the villainous nature of those into whose hands I had in all probability fallen. Jacintha he distrusted with an intensity only second to his distrust of Gasparo. As to Jerome, he had every

reason to know what I might expect should fate throw me into his terrible hands.

This knowledge and these fears he did not feel it necessary to impart to Tadge; nothing resulted from their interview, therefore, but a general understanding that Tadge should remain in the neighbourhood and keep a bright look-out, Oliver promising to apprise her of his movements, so that, if necessary, she might be able to communicate with him without a moment's delay.

"Ketch me sleeping with my eyes open!" cried the impulsive, warm-hearted creature. "Specially where them as I care for's concerned."

"You are goodness and fidelity itself, Tadge!" cried Oliver, with enthusiasm.

"I'm true—that's what I am," returned Tadge. "True as steel, that's all. Them as I like I stick to, and them as I don't, why—let 'em look out! That's my motto."

And with this statement in brief of her principles, she departed, leaving on Oliver's brain a rainbow vision of brilliant hues in strange combination as she disappeared.

On his homeward way Oliver revolved in his mind the points of this interview, and was proceeding, wrapped in thought, when he suddenly became conscious that his footsteps were being dogged.

Someone was following him, he felt rather than saw, and therefore he was not surprised when at a turn in the road a man broke through the bushes that skirted it, and stood before him.

It was the taciturn Dan!

There could be no mistaking that villainous face, those sinister eyes, or the great hands that hung down as if ready for any mischief that chance might find for such idle instruments to perform.

"Hullo!" cried Dan, with his usual form of address.

"You in these parts?" exclaimed Oliver, thrown off his guard, and so betrayed into recognition.

The fellow nodded.

When last they had met it was when the youth was under Jerome's care, and this man had come to him with messages from Becky Twinn, or Martha Pegwell. In all that interval Dan could hardly have caught a glimpse of Jerome's boy, as he was called, yet he recognized him now.

No doubt something that had taken place at Gasparo's, his new master's house, prepared him for doing so.

"You've left the old service and the old district, now?" Oliver said.

"Aye, aye," was the reply.

"And you're living in this neighbourhood?"

He nodded.

"Your own master?"

"No."

"Whose then?"

Oliver was thus inquisitive, because each new face that had known him in the old time and recognized now was a source of alarm.

"You know him," was Dan's long answer.

"I know him?"

A nod.

"Nonsense! Who is it?"

"The old 'un."

"I haven't an idea of your meaning."

"Her father."

"Whose?"

"Jacintha's."

"What! that would be old Gasparo?"

Dan nodded.

"He lives hereabouts?"

"Aye."

The information took Oliver by surprise. It did more. Like a flash of light, his mind connected the fact he heard with those which Tadge had just put him in possession of. Gasparo's treacherous hand had always been at the bottom of all the mischief of which he had any recollection, and it would be strange indeed if he had not a finger in this!

The temptation to question Dan was tantalizingly great; but the utter hopelessness of such a proceeding deterred him from attempting it. He had to confine himself to parrying the brute's own questions, which, though few, were cunningly put, and calculated to extract from Oliver the particulars as to his exact position.

Among other points he drew from the old sheepskin pocket-book a yellow and tattered scrap, and kneading it into the palm of his left hand with the knuckles of his right, in his approved manner, held it before Oliver's eyes.

"Read that," he said.

It was simply the old advertisement which Becky Twinn had inserted when I first fell into her clutches, and out of which Dan had, at that time, hoped to realize money. That hope seemed still to hang about him in a confused, hazy way.

"Found her, ain't they?" he asked, with a meaning grin.

"Why do you ask me?" Oliver retorted.

Dan simply grinned again.

"Lost her again, ain't they?" he then asked.

"I believe so," was the answer.

"How much?" demanded Dan.

"Do you mean what reward will be given for her restoration to her friends?"

There was a significant nod.

"Very little then, I'm afraid," said Oliver, struck with the sudden idea that possibly this ruffian might be detaining her in the hope of realizing a good round sum in the way of reward.

"A 'undred per'aps?" asked Dan.

"No; not twenty—not ten—I should say."

The fellow raised his forefinger and placed it at the side of his nose, to intimate that he was not to be blinded by any such subterfuge or misrepresentation.

"Gammon!" he then said.

"But I assure you—"

"Yah! I know."

"If you mean," said Oliver, "that you know the circumstances under which this poor girl has been carried off, you have the advantage of me. If I am to understand that you are aware of her situation—her hiding-place, or where she is detained; by force, if force has been used—I can only promise you that for any hint you may give me on this subject I will not only be most grateful, but I will reward you liberally."

But Dan only shook his sagacious head.

It was quite clear that he held exaggerated views as to the value of his secret, and had no mind to forestall, and so raise his market.

Like all cunning people, he was most transparent, and knowing what Oliver did, he saw that, like the majority of such folks, he was certain to over-reach himself.

However, the interview came to nothing, beyond this, that an appointment was made for the next day, Oliver being enjoined to advise with my friends in the meantime, and to come prepared to name the handsome sum at which they would reward him for his treachery to Gasparo.

The substance of this interview Oliver at once communicated to Tadge, and the two came to the unanimous conclusion that Gasparo was really at the bottom of what had happened—his residence in the neighbourhood being most suspicious—and that, in all probability, I was a prisoner in his house.

This house Tadge set herself to discover, and succeeded in doing so by following Dan home from the second interview with Oliver, which she witnessed, and which was fruitless in results, so far as the brute was concerned.

So far all was well; but Oliver's impetuosity destroyed all further progress.

He insisted on coming to the house and demanding to see me, and in that, as we have seen, he signally failed.

But with the young and ardent failure does not mean defeat, and so in his case, having failed in open action, he simply resolved on trying what strategy would do.

That I was in the house he, on reflection, felt absolutely certain.

Gasparo had tried to throw dust in his eyes, but to no purpose.

I was there, and the only question was as to how I might be extricated from the trap into which I had fallen.

Knowing nothing of this, I was not prepared for what happened as the days went on.

I remained in the house which was really my prison, and the manner of Gasparo did not alter towards me. To all my remonstrances and reproaches he turned a deaf ear, while I on my part, indignant at the treatment I was receiving, positively refused to listen to his arguments in behalf of the young suitor—the interesting emigrant, Abel Dormer, who had been bribed into seeking my hand—and, when he was introduced, behaved to him with freezing politeness.

The only one of that strange household whose bearing underwent a singular and inexplicable change was the hateful Dan.

Watching his opportunities, he would suddenly present himself before me in my gloomy apartment like a spectre.

"Hullo!" I would hear reverberating through the room.

Then when I turned towards the door, I would perceive the brutal face distended by a smile that showed a row of horse-teeth, and was greeted by an encouraging nod.

Sometimes I would inquire what he wanted.

"All right," he would reply, with peculiar gusto, and so disappear.

One morning, early, he startled me by an unusually excited and sprightly appearance for one so lethargic and undemonstrative.

"All right," he said, and added, in a whisper, "Look out!"

To add to the significance of this mysterious proceeding, he reappeared after I supposed him fairly gone, and, thrusting his head only into the room, repeated the mysterious injunction, "Look out!"

All that day I puzzled myself with the meaning of those singular words.

That something was about to happen I could not question: what it would be, or when it would take place, was a mystery.

So far as I could make out, Gasparo was absent that day, and if my young suitor were in the house he did not trouble me.

Hour after hour I kept as bright a look-out as was compatible with being the inmate of a room that had only a skylight to illuminate it.

I gazed up at the beautiful blue sky and the flying clouds; and, as evening drew on, I watched the rosy sunset as it was reflected above me, and thought that so far that day had been like the rest.

Darkness came—the stars shone on me in my solitude, and I was beginning to think I had overrated the importance of my jailer's warning, when, chancing to look up, I saw that the sky was red with a fierce glare, and that smoke, blended with flying sparks, was rolling over the skylight.

At the same moment cries and shrieks, blending confusedly, reached my ears.

Horrible to reflect on, I realized in an instant that the place was on fire.

Could it have been for this catastrophe that I was to prepare myself?

Surely not.

And if it were, of what avail was my vigilance?

I could not escape.

There was no means of communicating with any human being. In vain might I cry and implore for help—in vain exhaust myself in a struggle to get free.

"Surely," I thought, "Dan will come to me. He will recollect I am here; he knows my peril, and will extricate me from it."

But he came not. The rolling clouds of smoke grew lurid, and were mixed with flames; the sparks falling in showers and turning to white ashes as they fell, began to obscure the skylight. I could feel the strong heat, and the sound of crackling flames, and masses of heavily falling timbers mingled with the sound of voices.

My position became desperate.

Useless as I knew it to be, I exhausted my breath in screams for help. I called on Dan as on some visible providence, and beat my hands against the walls, in the vain hope that I might be heard amidst the tumult raging around me.

Suddenly a new source of peril presented itself.

With the roaring of the flames there blended the roaring of water. The monotonous pumping of an engine was audible, and a rushing stream was descending on the burning house—another second, and it came crash upon the skylight, bursting it in as with a blow, and then a deluge of water poured into the room, and I trembled lest in the midst of the fire I might perish of drowning.

But while this fear seized me, I was conscious of the trampling of feet and the sound of voices above.

"This way!" I heard a voice exclaim; "there must be a room here! Be steady a moment!"

Then the rush of waters ceased, and I could see black and grimed faces staring down through the broken skylight.

"Help me! Save me!" I shrieked.

"She is here!" I heard a voice exclaim in return.

"Here!" was shouted as by an echo.

Then there was a moment's commotion; a great trampling and altercation, orders, cries, and remonstrances, blended in confusion; and half dead with terror and excitement, I was conscious of someone descending by a rope through the aperture and rushing towards me.

I was conscious of being in Oliver's arms.

The house was consumed. How it came to be fired remained a mystery; but from what transpired subsequently, I have reason to suspect that Dan, who had been bribed by Oliver to connive at my escape, had planned it in this artful manner. He knew that Gasparo had many chemicals on the premises, and among them spirits of wine and similar substances which blaze freely enough to create alarm, but unless used in large quantities are harmless. The cunning idea of the man, I have no doubt, was to ignite a quantity of such spirits, so as to create alarm and confusion, in the midst of which he could effect my escape without appearing to betray his trust to Gasparo.

But in this he over-reached himself. The quantity consumed absolutely fired the premises, and the contriver of the mischief was unable to carry out his design.

He was found dead in a cellar underground, where



he had, no doubt, been suffocated. Beside him lay, overturned and empty, the flask from which he had poured the spirits, to the fumes of which he owed his death.

And this was his reward!

# CHAPTER L

## LEARNING THE WORST.

Oh, let me understand—he is not dead?

*Ofelia.*

AND now let us return to the Abbey, the residence of the Earl of Morant.

The violent ringing of the bell in Jacintha's sleeping-chamber speedily roused the entire household. It was, indeed, startling enough in the dead of the night, almost as much so as if the alarm bell itself, which hung in a little weather-boarded turret over the main entrance had given forth its deep, sonorous waves of sound, audible for miles over the quiet land.

On entering the room, pale and affrighted, they beheld Jacintha, standing, the very picture of horror and alarm, before the open panel in the wall.

"What is it? What has happened?" demanded a dozen voices at once.

Jacintha turned on the terrified domestics a helpless, bewildered look.

"See—see there!" she faltered, in a tone of anguish.

And as she spoke, she pointed—averting her head as she did so—to the aperture in the wall.

"The secret panel open!" cried the gray-haired old butler—the head of the establishment—who had been the first to hurry to the spot.

"You see it?" returned Jacintha.

"Someone has entered the room, then?"

"Yes."

"But they must have mounted the rotting ladder from the basement?"

"Of that I know nothing. I only know that, starting from a deep sleep, I beheld someone—a man of villainous aspect—standing by my bedside, and that after a struggle I—I thrust him back through the opening there!"

"Then he must have dropped to the bottom!"

"I fear so."

"Sixty feet at least."

"No, surely no!"

"Not an inch less. It must have killed him instantly."

"You fear so? Oh, this is horrible! Pray, pray let the earl be summoned! Let him be sent for instantly. I shudder to think what may have happened!"

The old servant bowed in compliance.

Yes, she did shudder, and her face was white with horror. The scene she had just passed through had shaken her, strong as she was in nerve and the power of self-control. The effects of the part she had taken in the strange interview were still upon her, and it was that interview, more than the mere act of treachery by which it had been followed, that gave her face its pallor, and overcame her with a sense of weakness.

The few words of explanation given to the old servant had been eagerly caught at by his fellows, and while one or two ran off to awaken the earl from his slumbers, the rest hastened to procure lights preparatory to making a descent of the well-like aperture yawning on the other side of the open panel.

A wax taper torn from the silver sconces pertaining to the toilet-table sufficed, even with its feeble rays, to reveal the nature of the place. The Abbey was of great antiquity, having only been restored and adapted as a place of residence within the last half-century, and the walls were of inordinate thickness. Here and there, they had been constructed hollow, with wells, so to speak, running through all the floors, from roof to basement. These wells—and this into which the domestics looked was one of them—were furnished with ladders so that access could be had from one floor to another, an invariable provision in perilous times. It was by means of this ladder that Haggart, as he had been called, had ascended to the chamber; and three or four of the servants at once contended for priority in descending to see what had happened.

Other lights being speedily forthcoming, it was easy to see that the well had been carefully formed in the stonework of the wall, and that the ladder had been fastened by staples close against the masonry. By stretching over, and looking keenly down, it was possible to detect something glimmering white in the darkness.

That was a human face.

The man Haggart lay there, still and motionless, staring upwards with large vacant eyes and dropped jaw.

Not without peril, one of the younger and more active of the domestics descended the ladder, and

soon his voice was heard rising from the echoing depths.

Jacintha, standing apart, listened with a deep intensity of interest, prompted by feelings very different to those which might be supposed to inspire her, while the lad spoke.

"Well?" demanded one of the servants in the room, "who is it?"

"Why, it's the extra hand."

"What! He who came to fill up Barker's place?"

"Yes."

"And how is he—alive or dead?"

"Dead."

The word had a hollow, ringing sound as it came up from below. Jacintha heard it, and an almost perceptible quivering passed over her.

"Quite sure?" inquired the man who was leaning over the ladder.

"Quite."

As he spoke there was a slight commotion at the door of the room, and the young earl entered, wearing a rich Indian dressing-gown, shot with threads of gold, but otherwise in *deshabille*. His handsome face was full of concern and dismay. Singling out his guest—the object of the infatuation that possessed his heart—he hastened towards her.

"How can I apologize to you for this terrible mishap?" he asked, with the intuitive politeness of a highly bred man.

"Oh," she replied, with a gracious smile, "no apologies are necessary on your lordship's part. It is I who reproach myself for having permitted my fears to bring about such a disastrous result. Had I been less terrified, and defended myself less fiercely, this unfortunate man—"

"Unfortunately—no; the criminal deserves the consequences of his crimes."

"But this terrible death."

"He is dead, then?"

"Unhappily."

She buried her face in her hands, and he saw that she shuddered, as if overcome with profound emotion.

"Pardon me," she said, sinking upon a couch; "but my alarm, my horror is too great for me to shake off. I see it all again. I am startled out of my sleep by the creaking of the secret panel—I see the stealing form in the moonlight—I hear the clicking of my jewels, as a hand is laid on them—they gleam and glisten, and, with a woman's folly, I cry out—the assassin turns upon me with muttered oaths—I am attacked—I resist—terror inspires me with a strength beyond my own—he feels it, and retreats towards the panel—we struggle—with one last concentrated effort I throw him from me, and he disappears! Merciful heaven! I see him now as he falls down the abyss whence his death-shriek rises to my ears!"

As if beholding what she described so falsely, the Italian cowered down with eyes hidden beneath her fingers, and a piteous groan escaped her.

"Calm yourself, pray calm yourself," cried the sympathetic young earl. "You must not dwell upon these details. They are too distressing."

But Jacintha was not easily subdued into calmness.

An admirable actress, she appeared utterly incapable of shaking off the impression of the well-imagined scene, the horror of which appeared to overwhelm her. The earl patiently continued his exertions to console and reassure her; but to little effect.

After awhile he gave practical instructions to the servants to remove the body of the dead man from the place in which it lay to a room easily accessible from the lower part of the house, and to direct the family physician to make an examination of it. These instructions were rapidly obeyed, but by that time the whole house was aroused, and when the nature of what had happened was ascertained, the greatest consternation prevailed. The ladies flocked to the room in which Jacintha remained, and overwhelmed her with questions and sympathy.

Had it not so happened that she had been greatly perturbed by what had transpired between the unfortunate Haggart and herself, she might have found some difficulty in supporting the paroxysm of alarm she affected.

But the firmest of her sex could not have passed unmoved through such a scene as had been enacted in that chamber, and with such a climax as had followed it, without emotion, and her natural perturbation was easily mistaken for the horror and dismay she did not feel.

After a time—a sufficient time for the decency of the occasion—she ventured to express a wish to indulge her emotions in solitude, and the wish was reluctantly acceded to. The ladies who had crowded in, displaying all the eccentricities of hasty night toilets, departed, and when the Earl of Morant had carefully closed the panel in the wall, and secured it from within, he also took his leave.

Slowly and reluctantly, it must be confessed, he dragged himself from the chamber.

"I cannot sufficiently express my regret at all this," he whispered, as Jacintha permitted him to play with the tips of her beautiful fingers. "The alarm you must have suffered!"

"Do not mention it, my lord," she replied; "happily I am no coward. Danger does not paralyze me. It is the unhappy result that I alone regret."

"Nay, on that ground I entreat you to compose yourself," cried the earl; "not the slightest possible blame can attach to you in this matter. You could have no motive but of self-defence."

"None, none!" she exclaimed, hurriedly.

"And in such a case that justifies the extreme measures. Oh, yes, you must acquit yourself as all will acquit you; as for the object of your sympathy, think what he was, how fallen, how degraded, how hopelessly criminal he must have been to attempt an act like this! Remember that, and the thought will help you to regain the composure you have lost."

He raised the fingers to his lips and imprinted a warm, impassioned kiss on them.

The object of his ardent regard did not resist this show of affection, a deep sigh was her only response.

He understood its meaning. Love is quick to interpret the signs of responsive affection, and rendered happy by this simple indication of feeling, he quitted the apartment.

The instant his lordship had disappeared Jacintha started to her feet.

"Thank heaven!" she exclaimed, with a sense of relief.

Then crossing the apartment she carefully turned the key in the lock.

"Let me think," she pursued, returning to the couch, on which she seated herself, "let me think over what has happened and what will come of this night's work. Haggart dead! Can I believe it? Is it true? Has the dream of years and years realized itself? Incredible! I am free then, free to come and go, and shape my future as I will! And he perished by his own hand to make me this recompense for all the misery he has heaped upon me. By his own hand, not mine. He came to me; I did not seek him out. He laid the trap for his own fate; it was none of my doing. If I lie on my death-bed to-morrow, this night's work will never trouble me."

No?

Why did she pause then? And that solemn look which stole over her expressive face, whence came it? Had she no misgiving even then, even in that house of excitement, as to how her crime might look in the far-off hour of which she spoke, when life, robbed of its delusion, lies bare and cold and stark to the soul's view?

A moment's hesitation and the glow of triumph was bright upon her cheek again.

"The fool!" she ejaculated, "to come between me and my ambition at such a time! Why, what did I need but this? What could Providence have given me that I should have prized as I prize the consciousness of his death? Upon my upward path he formed the only barrier. It was he alone whom I dreaded. His power alone made me a coward. And now, what stands between me and the earl—between me and a coronet? Nothing! Nothing! His death gives me freedom, and with freedom everything worth the having."

In the intensity of her gratification—in the excitement of realizing the future before her—the impetuous woman could not endure repose. Starting up, she paced to and fro, gesticulating as she went, sometimes speaking aloud, sometimes silent, but always thinking, thinking, with desperate earnestness.

Suddenly she arrested her steps, and the face reflected in the mirror before her was white and rigid.

A single thought had paralyzed her.

"What if they were mistaken? If he is but stunned, and not dead—not dead! Impossible! And yet, he might revive, he might live to thwart me, to denounce me! What if, at this moment, he is babbling—maundering on about the past—telling me my history, my secrets—letting the broad daylight into all that I have concealed so cleverly. It may be so, and I standing here helpless to confute—to silence—"

She thrust her hand into her bosom at that word "silence," and the white horror of her face changed to a crimson flush.

The next moment she was making towards the closed door.

"This is intolerable," she muttered, with a choking voice. "I must know for certain what has happened. Best or worst, I must be satisfied. I must, at all risks, see at all risks."

With a hand that trembled with irrepressible emotion she unlocked the door and went forth.

The house was dark and very still. She could hear the wind moaning up in the cupola crowning the

tower where the alarm bell hung. And below, at a distance, there were voices.

Those came from the room to which they had conveyed the mangled body of the man whose death she had sought to compass. Not a doubt of that. Moving step by step along the corridor, towards the great staircase, her mind depicted the scene in that room as vividly as if she had been gazing on it with her visible eyes.

"'Tis the porter's room," she thought, "and the body lies there on the floor in the middle of it; the doctor kneels beside it, anxious and thoughtful, looking up to the earl at intervals, his words listened to, and every expression of his face watched by the rest gathered about them. I see it all. No, not all. He is alive, and speaks; he is dead and silent. Which, which? Oh, if I could but see! If I could but see that!"

(To be continued.)

## OLIVER DARVEL.

### CHAPTER IV.

MR. TILSON retired to his couch much the worse for what he had drunk, for he was habitually a temperate man. He slept heavily through many hours of the night, but towards dawn his slumbers became gradually disturbed, and he lay in that state of semi-consciousness in which the most vivid and startling dreams fit through the brain.

He saw his nephew borne through a surging flood which eddied and dashed him to and fro, as if in mockery of the helpless human being who held out his hands imploringly for help that never came. He saw him sinking down—down, till the last glimpse of him disappeared, and then the reproachful face of his lost sister loomed through the clouds above that sinking head; her lips unclosed, and in accents of bitter despair she wailed:

"Too late—too late! You might have saved him, and you would not!"

That piercing cry of anguish thoroughly aroused the sleeper, and he sat up in his bed white and trembling. But in a few moments he recovered his usual equanimity, and muttered, half contemptuously: "Fah! it was only a dream. I have thought of that pestilent runaway till he has become a veritable nightmare to me. I'll get up at once, and I'll move all the powers on earth but I'll find him, for I am getting tired of this."

When Mr. Tilson opened his window he found it to be much later than he supposed. When he rang for his breakfast to be brought up, the waiter informed him that he had been at his door twice that morning, for he was so uncommon late that Mrs. Bolby, the landlady, was afraid that something might be wrong. "You looks bilious, sir," the man went on, "and my wife says that is a sure sign that somethin's wrong. You'd better be a lookin' arter your 'ealth, Mr. Tilson."

It always offended Mr. Tilson to have his appearance commented on, and he curtly replied:

"Attend to your own business, if you please, which is to wait on me, Wilkins, and not to give me advice. I am quite competent to take care of my own health, and if Mrs. Wilkins cannot talk better sense than that, I would advise you to give over quoting her opinions."

Wilkins, rather crestfallen, spoke no more on that occasion, but he afterwards confidently asserted "that if ever he see death in any man's face, it was in that of Mr. Tilson, when he spoke them crusty words, although he was a heating ham an' hegge to a hextent that was wonderful, considering."

The emphasis on the last word expressed volumes, and seemed perfectly satisfactory to his listeners.

Having administered this rebuff to his presumptuous servant, Mr. Tilson finished his breakfast in surly silence, and then went out to seek the nearest police-station to give a minute description of his nephew, and urge the officials to use every effort to discover his whereabouts.

He stated his wishes with the accuracy and conciseness of a man of business habits, but he was so much occupied with his own thoughts that he did not notice the singular expression that came into the face of the man to whom he was speaking.

When Mr. Tilson finished the officer asked: "Have you seen a morning paper, Mr. Tilson? But of course you have not, or you would not have come here on this errand."

The listener became livid. He gasped:

"No—I was up late; my mind was occupied with other things, and—and I have not looked into the daily paper. Oh, heaven! what is there in it that has any bearing on the fate of my unhappy nephew?"

"Only this, sir, and from it you will see that your efforts to recover young Darvel will now be useless."

The officer knew something of the treatment Oliver habitually received at the hands of his uncle, for the neighbours had often talked freely of the bondage in which the young man was held, therefore he was less considerate for Mr. Tilson's feelings than he might have been under other circumstances, and no one could have been more shocked and surprised at the effect his words produced.

The stricken man snatched the paper, glanced at the heading of the article we have already seen, rapidly gathered the sense of the paragraph, and then, with a long, gasping sigh, moaned:

"Too late indeed! Oh, Mary, Mary, forgive me!" and fell senseless on the floor.

An alarmed group gathered around him, and one of them, seeing the turgid complexion and laboured breathing, sententiously said:

"Apoplexy—get him home, and call in a physician as soon as possible."

In a few moments a medical man was found, and after examining the patient he confirmed the opinion already pronounced.

Under his directions Mr. Tilson was conveyed to his lodgings, and everything that was possible done for his relief; but he never spoke again, and after twenty-four hours of unconsciousness he gradually passed into the oblivion of death.

His brother was summoned to his bedside, but he evinced little emotion at the condition in which he found the dying man; he only uttered a strong exclamation of contempt when informed of the cause of his sudden seizure.

The young lawyer who had drawn up the will took a vivid interest in the case of his first client, and he watched over the heavy slumbers of the sick man with far more interest than was felt by his own brother.

"Poor James has gone where we must all expect to follow him before long."

Young Fisher looked at him in some surprise. He reverently said:

"The spirit has gone to its Maker—I trust to meet the reward of an honourable and unstained life."

"Oh, of course—of course. There wasn't an honest man going than my brother James, and he turned it to the best account, too. 'Honesty's the best policy,' the copy-books say, and James Tilson acted up to it. By the way, we must seal up his effects till after the burial, though I have reason to believe there is no will."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said young Fisher, "but there is a will, which was drawn up by myself only last night, and witnessed by two of the most respectable gentlemen in the house—Buckley and Catron—men well known in the mercantile world."

John Tilson blankly regarded the speaker, for he had made up his mind that his brother could not have so promptly carried out his threat of making his will. Fisher went on:

"The will was deposited in the iron safe in that closet, sir, and we had better seal up the door before anyone is permitted to enter the room."

In a kind of dumb rage Mr. Tilson assented to this necessary precaution, and Fisher performed the required service.

Mabel had not been informed of the dangerous condition of her uncle, and the sudden announcement of his death, made by her father when he came back to the cottage, gave her a severe shock.

She was still very delicate, but her father seemed to have no idea that her nerves were not so strong as his own. She naturally mistook the gloom of his face for sorrow, and used such efforts as she dared to console him. But Mr. Tilson met them all with moroseness, and at length asked:

"Have you read the paper for the last few days?"

"Did you see it on Wednesday?"

"No, sir."

"You don't know, then, what gave your uncle the shock that brought on this fatal attack?"

She became so pale that he feared she was going to faint, but the keen apprehension thus aroused effectually prevented such a catastrophe. She gasped:

"It was something concerning my poor, lost Oliver! Oh, tell me quickly, in pity tell me, what has happened to him! It must have been very, very dreadful to have so fatal an effect upon my uncle!"

A faint feeling of compassion stirred the cold heart of John Tilson, and he more gently said:

"I thought you had more strength, Mabel, but the truth must be told you some time."

"Speak, speak! tell me all. The very, very worst is better than this fearful suspense. Where is Oliver?"

"What has happened to him?"

"The worst that can happen to any man, for he has committed suicide."

She sank back, with a faint, wailing cry, that sounded like the last moan of a breaking heart, and for many moments sighs burst from her over-tasked bosom.

No tears came with their soothing power to soften the anguish of this awful revelation. Her love, her idol, had perished by his own hand—driven to desperation by the cruel harshness with which he had been treated—and with difficulty she restrained the accusing words that arose to her lips against the kinsman who had so dearly expiated his crime.

Mabel covered her face with her hands, and sat mute, and shuddering in every pulse of her sensitive frame. Her father made no effort to console her, for he intuitively felt that he should but aggravate the silent woe of that stricken heart; and for once he had feeling and discretion enough to keep silent till the tornado of anguish had swept over her and done its work. She at length lifted her colourless face, and piteously asked:

"Where is he, ath? What led him to commit so fatal an act? Oh, you have surely been to the place and learned all that was to be told?"

"Yes, of course. I went to the low den where Oliver had concealed himself. There is no doubt that he destroyed himself in a moment of discouragement and despair. He felt how unfit he was to battle with the world, so thought it best to leave it."

"And—and—what has been done with—with his remains?" she forced herself to ask.

"Oh, I suppose they were buried as the law directs in such cases. I did not interfere. I had no right to do so, you know."

Her eyes blazed with a dark fire that was not natural to them, as she vehemently cried:

"You had the right. You are his own mother's brother; yet you suffered him to be thrown into a hole, with no prayer for his sinful soul—no more respect than might have been shown to a beast!"

Exhausted by this unusual outburst, Mabel sank back, moaning as if in deep pain. For a moment her father was angry, but, from motives of self-interest, he repressed the expression of his irritation.

Oliver was dead, and, after him, his daughter might be named as the heiress of his brother's wealth. If so, he must keep on fair terms with her, that he might secure the management of the estate, from which he felt assured the will had been made to cut him off.

It was very provoking that his brother James had made a will, but if Mabel proved to be the legatee, he could still hold both herself and her fortune in his strong grasp. Thinking thus, he replied:

"Don't be so violent, child, and I promise you that I will see what can be done. And now you look so wan and worn out, I think the best thing for you will be to lie down and try to compose your poor spirits."

Feeling how necessary solitude was to her in the distracted state of her mind, Mabel thankfully accepted the suggestion and went to her own room.

For three days she remained secluded in her own room, wrestling for calmness and resignation to this awful calamity, and asking help where alone it was to be found.

Mabel recalled the last time she had seen her uncle, and she knew that his harshness to Oliver had been repented; that he would have atoned for it had the power to do so been granted him, and her heart softened towards him, till she found it possible to forgive him for driving her cousin to ruin and death.

The funeral cortège was quite imposing, and everything was conducted on a scale befitting the fortune left by the deceased.

On their return from the grave, the will was read. Mabel would have declined being present, but her father insisted, and Mr. Fisher respectfully informed her that she was vitally interested in its contents, and had better remain.

She took her place beside the table with a dreary feeling of heart-sickness, wondering of what value her uncle's hoards would be to anyone, now that the rightful heir was gone into that undiscovered land to which she shuddered to follow him, even in imagination.

She patiently prepared to listen, and a dull feeling of surprise at the amount of her uncle's wealth was her predominant feeling when she heard the schedule of his property read over; but she seemed rather shocked than gratified when she learned that all was left entirely to herself to do with as she pleased, provided Oliver Darvel's life formed no barrier to her accession to it.

"Oh, if he were only living, how gladly would I surrender all—all to him," was the cry of her stricken heart, and she sat so long silent after the voice of the reader ceased that her father impatiently burst forth:

"You seem hardly better pleased at this unaccountable will than I am myself, Mabel. It is a shame for any man to leave a daughter entirely independent of her father, even to cut him off from all control of her pecuniary affairs, as James Tilson has done. I don't believe that he could have been per-



fectly sane when he executed such a testament as that."

Messrs. Buckley and Catron here spoke at the same time.

"We can vouch for your brother's entire sanity, Mr. Tilson, so you cannot attack the will on that ground, if such be your purpose."

"You mistake me, gentlemen," he brusquely replied, "If I even believed James to have been a madman when he dictated that absurd document, I should not contest it. Thank heaven, I have enough of my own to lift me above coveting the property of my brother, though I do think he has treated me badly in taking from me all control over my only child. In a few months Mabel will be of age, but so far as I am concerned, she may assume possession of her estate to-morrow—henceforth the tie between us is but a rope of sand."

"It would be, if it were not founded on the indestructible affection of parent and child," said Mabel, gravely and sweetly. "Father, I shall love you as tenderly as before this bequest was made. I accept it for the benefit of others as well as for my own, for large means are but a delegated trust, after all. I sincerely believe that as I shall use this money, I shall be judged hereafter, and I shall hardly commence my new duties by ingratitude to my only parent."

Mr. Tilson listened moodily, and with curling lip replied:

"We shall see—we shall see how much your professions are worth."

Then turning to the lawyer, he went on:

"Mr. Fisher, you can do all that is necessary, for since I am so pointedly excluded from all interference with my daughter's inheritance, I decline having anything to do with the business. Manage her affairs as Miss Tilson directs."

Though deeply pained by her father's evident chagrin and ill-feeling towards herself, Mabel tried to retain her calmness.

She turned to the young lawyer, and with her sad eyes fixed on his flushed face, gently said:

"It is also my wish to retain you as my legal adviser, Mr. Fisher."

The struggling young man eagerly grasped at the proposal which opened to him a prospect of escape from the poverty that hemmed him in; he stammered:

"I am sure, Miss Tilson, that I shall be most happy to serve you in any way."

Buckley and Catron here spoke up, and bore such high testimony to Mr. Fisher's integrity and ability that Mabel bowed courteously, and taking her father's arm, left the room, the latter scarcely deigning to lift his hat to those he considered instrumental in assisting his brother to swindle him out of the estate which he grudgingly saw must go to his daughter.

There was another cause of irritation, too. Mabel, he felt sure, would assert her own independence, at least, so far as to refuse to have a distasteful husband thrust on her acceptance, and there was less chance than ever that Denton would become his son-in-law.

There was but one drop of sweetness in all this gall. Mr. Tilson half consoled himself with the reflection that he could now rid himself of his daughter, even if she refused to marry the man he had chosen for her, and install Ruth in her place; for the artful creature had found the means of fascinating this hard, cold man to that point that he was anxiously seeking an opportunity to publish his infatuation to the world by making her his wife.

Under such circumstances, the drive back to the cottage was not agreeable. Mr. Tilson scarcely spoke a word, and Mabel felt that the new independence guaranteed to her by the provisions of her uncle's will had too deeply offended and embittered him to hope, however tender and submissive she might prove herself, that he would ever forgive her for the new attitude she was compelled to assume towards him.

## CHAPTER V.

MR. DENTON did not attend the reading of the will. However, the news soon travelled to him that, in consequence of her cousin's sad death, Mabel had become the heiress of her uncle's fortune.

This information was scarcely more welcome to her suitor than it had proved to her father, for he saw in it the rupture of the feeble tie that existed between them. His own fortune was too ample to render that of James Tilson an object, large as it was, for Denton and Co. ranked themselves among the merchant princes of London.

But Denton was not a bad-hearted man, and he thought if Mabel could be happier in the quiet enjoyment of her own fortune than as lady paramount of the gilded pagoda in which he had intended to enshrine her, he would accept his fate with philosophy, wish her well in her new sphere, and look around for another to supply her place.

But he reflected that he would give her time to understand her new position before he appeared before her to attempt to arrive at a personal understanding with herself, so he did not call at the cottage till a week after.

On a clear, cool evening Mr. Denton set out for the suburban cottage, at a rather early hour, in the hope that he should be able to secure an interview with Miss Tilson before her father came home.

A conversation had already taken place between the father and daughter, which was decisive on more points than one. On the previous morning Mr. Tilson had entered Mabel's little parlour before his carriage was brought round, and standing with his elbows resting on the low mantel, he looked down on her with cold sternness, and asked:

"What message shall I take to your intended husband, Mabel?"

"Whom can you refer to, father?" she evasively replied, for she dreaded the contest which she knew was approaching.

"As if you do not know," he contemptuously retorted. "Don't palter with me, girl, for I am in no humour to be trifled with. I am in as deep earnest now about marrying you to Denton as I was before this money came to you. A promise is a promise, and should be sacredly kept."

"But I cannot be bound by one I never made, sir," replied Mabel, with a degree of firmness that surprised herself. "Mr. Denton has never asked me himself to become his wife. If he had done so, I should have given him the same answer before I inherited money as I shall give him now."

"Which means that you intend to defy me, and set my wishes at naught, near as you know they lie to my heart," was the fierce response, and poor Mabel shrank from the steely glare of his cold gray eyes.

"Father," she deprecatingly said, "you have always been aware how impossible it was for me to accept Mr. Denton. I shall give my hand to no living man. I beg that this assurance may suffice, and that you will speak no more on this subject. Mr. Denton will scarcely break his heart over the rejection of a woman he has not seen more than half a dozen times."

Tilson grimly responded:

"So—this is your ultimatum, is it? Very well—now hear mine. Since you defy me, my house shall no longer be a home to so independent a lady as you are, and you can make arrangements to take possession of your own in as brief a space of time as possible."

"Father!" she gasped, uncertain whether she could have heard him aright. "Will you indeed cast off your only child for so slight a thing as this? Is the disappointment of Mr. Denton of more importance than the happiness of my whole life? Oh, think—think how lonely—how desolate my lot will be, with no tie to bind me to the home to which you seem so willing to banish me! Have patience with me, father—compassion for me, for I have suffered much. I still suffer keenly, though I am outwardly calm."

In her excitement she attempted to clasp his hand, but he wrenched it from her with some violence, and bitterly responded:

"You have the power to choose your own fate. If you dread the isolated life you anticipate, accept the one I offer you. I wish you to understand, Mabel, that I am deeply in earnest; as Mrs. Denton you will be still my daughter—as the lady of Fernely you are, from this day, nothing to me. You may take your fate in your own hands, and make of it what you can. I interfere no farther with it."

Mabel had long felt that her father rather endured than loved her, and there was something in his manner now that convinced her of his earnest desire to rid himself of her presence beneath his roof under any pretext that might offer itself, though she was far from suspecting the true cause of his conduct.

After wiping away a few bitter tears, the unhappy daughter said:

"I cannot alter my decision, father, even if you do cast me off. Feeling as I do towards Mr. Denton, it would be an irreparable wrong to him to give him my hand. I have but the choice of evils, but I must be true to my own convictions of right. I shall remove to Fernely, sir, as soon as the house can be put in order for my reception; and I will write to my old governess, Mrs. Minturn, and invite her to reside with me. She was my mother's friend, and I hope she will not refuse to become mine."

Something like a gleam of triumph shone from the cold eyes of Mr. Tilson, as he sternly said:

"I anticipated that such would be your decision. Since your mind is made up to go, the sooner you leave the shelter of my roof the better. Shall I call on Fisher, and give him your commands about getting your house ready for you, or would you prefer writing to him yourself?"

Mabel threw herself on a sofa and wept as if her heart would break.

The tie that bound her to her father was slight

compared with that which exists between an affectionate parent and his child; but hard and stern as John Tilson had always been to her, Mabel loved him with that instinctive affection due to the bond of blood that existed between them.

It was a long time before she regained sufficient composure to write to her lawyer, and to the old friend, to whom she had referred as her future companion.

A few brief lines stating her wishes sufficed for Mr. Fisher; but to Mrs. Minturn she poured out the fulness of her overburdened heart, and entreated her to give up the secluded country home in which she lived, and for her sake consent to share the prosperity which had come too late to secure happiness.

A reply from the lawyer soon came, which contained the following words:

"London, October 8, 18—.

"MISS TILSON.—Your note reached me just as I returned from a flying visit to your villa, and I am happy to be able to reply at once to your inquiry as to when the house can be made ready to receive you.

"You are not, perhaps, aware that this property was purchased very lately by your uncle, and that it still remains in exactly the same condition as when left by its former occupants. It is a charming summer residence, overlooking the Thames. Every part of the house is furnished with taste and luxury, and the housekeeper of the former owner still remains to take care of it.

"The gardener was also retained by Mr. James Tilson, and you will find the grounds in excellent order.

"I will visit the place again to-morrow, and inform the housekeeper that it is your purpose to take up your abode at Fernely.—Respectfully,

"THOMAS FISHER."

For the first time, Mabel felt a sense of power in her new possessions which gratified her. This was infinitely better than to be turned adrift upon the world without a home to shelter herself in, as she felt assured would have been her fate if she had refused Denton while dependent on her father. She felt deeply grateful to her uncle for saving her from this, and almost forgave him for his harshness to Oliver, tragic as she believed its results to have been.

Mabel declined leaving her room, as she had no appetite, and the cup of tea she ordered was brought to her by the boy who attended to Mr. Tilson's horse. Surprised at such an apparition in her apartment, she inquired:

"Where is Ruth? and why has she sent you to wait on me instead of coming herself?"

With a broad grin, the lad replied:

"I dunno, mum, 'less she's a gittin' too gran' to de for other people. Ruth says she's a steppin' up in this worl', she is, and when somebody's gone where they b'longs, somebody else'll take the place she had a good right to long ago."

Mabel changed colour, and put down the untasted cup of tea; she hurriedly said:

"That will do, Jem; you can go, and I will ring when I want you."

This, then, was the secret of her expulsion from her father's roof. He wished to install a new and more congenial mistress in his house than she had been; but her pride was deeply wounded that he should have looked no higher than his own servant-maid.

Mabel understood now why all her efforts to rid herself of this woman had failed. Her father willed that Ruth should remain, and she had done so.

Resolved to assure herself if her conjectures were true, Mabel calmed herself as well as she could, and rang the bell.

Jem answered the summons, and she bade him inform Ruth that she desired to speak with her a few moments.

After some delay the girl came in, dressed as if for visiting, and without waiting for an invitation to be seated, flung herself into a chair.

She glibly said:

"The boy says as 'ow you're wanting to say something to me, Miss Tilson, and I'm glad of it, for I've something very particular to say to you, miss."

"I believe I can anticipate your communication," replied Mabel, quietly. "I have not been so unobedient as, perhaps, you may have thought me, and I know beforehand what you have to tell me."

The woman tossed her head, and with an embarrassed laugh, said:

"So much the better if you know habout it a'ready. The banns 'as been published twice a'ready, an' day after to-morrow they'll be out the third time, so in the morning o' that day we means to be united in what the books call the 'oly bonds o' wedlock. So, as I'm so soon to be your step-ma, I didn't think it was seemly to be a waitin' on you any longer myself, so I sent Jem. I means to 'ave a maid o' my own arter this week."

To this vulgar tirade Mabel was too heart-sick to reply. This coarse, uneducated creature, whose youth and good looks were her only attractions, was to take the position once held by her gentle and refined mother, and would probably be treated with far more consideration than had ever been awarded to her, for Mabel intuitively knew that there could have been very little congeniality between her parents. She felt that as the wife of such a man as John Tilson, she herself would pine away and die, and she comprehended why she had been left motherless in her early childhood.

After a pause she controlled her voice sufficiently to say:

"I am to understand you are to be married to my father in two more days?"

The girl nodded.

Mabel raised her hand commandingly.

"That will do, Ruth. I see very plainly that I have long been in the way here, but I will remove my presence as soon as possible."

Deeply offended, the bride elect tossed her head defiantly, and retorted:

"The farther away the better, miss, if it comes to that. I don't want any superfluous creature a spyin' aroun' my house, an' a sneerin' at me, which is its lawful mistress. So, ef you please, you can get away from here as soon as you choose."

"I shall take my own time for removing, and you will do well to remember that so long as I am here I am mistress and not you. You can go now, and I forbid you to appear in my presence again."

"Mighty fine, to be sure! How we can put on hairs after a lot o' money 'as been left us; but I reckon it hadn't a been for poor Mr. Oliver a killin' of hisself in that shockin' manner, you'd not a talked quite so grand and 'igh."

At this coarse mention of her unhappy cousin's fate Mabel became very pale, and she imperiously pointed towards the door as she uttered the single word "Go!" in a tone Ruth thought it best to obey.

As the door closed on the girl, Mabel sank down half broken-hearted. She saw now the forlorn position in which she was actually placed. She felt that a wide gulf was opened between herself and her father, and she fully comprehended that his new wife would use all her power to prevent it from being bridged over by one kind thought or gentle feeling.

When she departed from her father's house it would be for the last time, and never again could she hope to be regarded by him in the light of an affectionate daughter.

The next morning a new servant girl, employed by Ruth, in anticipation of her future state, brought in Mabel's breakfast.

The day was spent in collecting such memorials as had belonged to her mother which she could not bear to leave in the possession of her vulgar successor, and she intended to offer more than their value if any opposition were made to her taking them away.

In the evening Mr. Denton came. He found her in her little parlour looking worn out and wretched, but this did not strike him as strange, considering the agitating scenes through which she must have lately passed.

Mr. Denton was a bachelor of forty, with a portly figure and rufous face, but he was neither destitute of feeling nor incapable of, in some measure, understanding such a woman as Mabel Tilson.

He intuitively felt her superiority to the common herd of young women, and it was this appreciation of her higher qualities which led him to desire to trust the welfare of his home and the honour of his unblemished name in her keeping.

He regarded her with a sympathetic expression as he said:

"My dear Miss Tilson, you are looking really ill. Permit me to express my sympathy for the loss you have sustained in your excellent uncle, and also my congratulations for the good fortune which has accrued to you through that loss."

"Thank you," replied Mabel, with a choking sensation in her throat, as she thought of that heavier loss of which her visitor seemed unconscious; but she stifled her emotion and went on: "I have suffered much lately from several causes, and the latest blow has not been the least severe. Only yesterday I learned that my father is about to place a new mistress over this establishment, and in consequence of that, I am preparing to leave his house in the morning."

What impelled Mabel to place this confidence in Mr. Denton she could not have explained, but her heart was full of bitterness and sorrow, and she could not forbear speaking to him as to a trusted friend, needless of the opening she thus afforded him to say what was on his mind.

He drew his chair nearer to the sofa on which she sat, and said:

"Mr. Tilson has hinted something of the kind to

me before, but he always spoke as if his own marriage would be contingent on yours. You are already aware of his wishes with respect to myself, Miss Tilson, and I came hither this evening to say to you that I am ready and anxious to fulfil my part of the contract as soon as you may desire. You can leave your father's house to become mistress of mine to-morrow, if you choose."

Mabel listened so calmly that her wooer drew no favourable augury from her manner. After a painful pause she said:

"If I believed that you are strongly attached to me, Mr. Denton, I should more deeply regret what I am compelled to say; but your fancy for me is merely founded on the belief that I could sustain the prestige of your fine establishment, at least with credit to you and myself. You want a wife, but you do not feel that I am the one fair spirit in the world for you. Don't interrupt me with protestations, if you please, I think I understand all you would say, Mr. Denton, and I will add that I respect you too highly to shrink from speaking the truth. Under no circumstances could I have wronged you so deeply as to consent to become your wife, and now that I am independent in fortune I assure you that it is my unalterable purpose never to give my hand in marriage at all. My father might have explained this to you, and saved you from the annoyance of hearing it from my own lips, but he clung to the hope that I would enter into his views on this subject."

Mr. Denton arose, looking disconcerted and slightly offended. He said:

"I preferred hearing my fate from yourself, Miss Tilson. You have been explicit enough, I must say, and I fully understand that all is over between us. I came hither hoping to bear back with me the assurance that at no distant day I might claim the fulfilment of the pledges made in your name, but you have crushed my hopes at one blow. Thank heaven! Paul Denton, with the fortune of a prince, will not be likely to go begging for a wife."

At another time Mabel could have smiled at these characteristic words, but now she was far too deeply depressed to feel the slightest impulse of mirth at any absurdity, however glaring. She held out her hand and gently said:

"When you think over this meeting and its results, Mr. Denton, you will forgive me, I am sure, for the ungracious part I am compelled to play towards you."

Denton was touched by the pale, sad face that looked up to his, and he pressed her offered hand to his lips.

"I think I understand you, Miss Tilson, and I must still think highly of you, for I know nothing of you that is not true and womanly. Remember that, in spite of what has now passed, I shall always be your friend, and if I can hereafter serve you in any way, I will use my best efforts to do so."

"Thank you—thank you very much, for I have no friend, Mr. Denton. Even my own father deserts and casts me off. I hope you will remember this promise, and at least try and feel kindly towards me."

"That I must always do, Miss Tilson, and moreover, I promise you the friendship of the future Mrs. Denton, for I must find a wife. I am tired of my bachelor life, and I want a home—such a home as a good and gentle woman can make for me."

"I hope that you will soon find such a wife."

Denton took his leave in a mixed state of feeling. Mabel, glad that this was definitely settled without the loss of a friend, returned to her preparations for departure.

Mr. Tilson did not come home till a late hour of the night, and on the following morning, when Mabel joined him at the breakfast-table, he looked even sterner and more uncompromising than in their last interview.

The meal was eaten almost in silence, and when she arose he abruptly did the same, strode before her into the parlour, and closed the door behind him with a bang.

(To be continued.)

## ZEHRA.

### CHAPTER VII.

CHARLES OF LEON had seen enough to convince him that he was watched by the spies of the Alcalde of Granada; but why this should be, he could not imagine, unless some false idea was entertained of his visit to southern Spain.

To be sure, he had other business than to travel, but then he felt confident that no one save himself and the servant could know of it. He did not believe that Abdalla knew as much as he professed, or even that he mistrusted the truth. More likely was it that the mysterious man only threw out his vague asser-

tions for the purpose of penetrating the Christian's secret.

Why, then, should the Alcalde persecute him? It might be from motives of chagrin caused by the defeat at the tournament; but even this surmise did not wholly satisfy him.

The day was drawing to a close—it was the day succeeding that on which the events recorded in the last chapter took place. Charles of Leon was in his room at the hostelry he had chosen, and Pedro was engaged in polishing some portions of his master's armour.

"Have you gained any clue yet to the end of our business?" asked the esquire.

"No."

"Nor will you, I'm thinking. Let us get out of this place."

"Not yet, Pedro. Ere long I may."

"But what is to keep us?"

"I may find what I seek."

"In Granada?"

"Perhaps so."

Pedro looked curiously up into his master's face, for the tone in which he spoke struck him as being peculiar.

"You shall accompany me to-night," continued Charles, "so have our weapons ready. We may need them."

"Look you, Sir Charles," said Pedro, stopping his work and gazing earnestly into his master's face. "I don't wish to be importunate, nor will I be—but I should like to know if this business to-night has anything to do with what we are after?"

"And suppose it has not?"

"Then it had better be dropped."

"Ah, you are getting sage, Pedro."

"No—I am always wise. You think of going to Ben Hamed's dwelling to-night."

"Ha!"

"Yes. You talk in your sleep!" The young knight blushed, for he saw that Pedro had an inkling of the truth.

"Well, well," he said, at length, "I am going to Ben Hamed's, and I wish you to go with me."

"If you persist, I cannot disobey. But you are running your neck into a dangerous place, for I hear that Zehra is to become the king's wife."

"And do you think that fair young creature shall be sacrificed?"

"If she don't like it, it does seem hard."

"Like it!" uttered Charles. "I'll tell you how she likes it!" And thereupon he told his esquire all that had transpired upon the banks of the Darro.

"Then, by San Dominic," cried Pedro, as he leaped to his feet, "I'll join you with my whole heart."

"I knew your heart was in the right place," said Charles, with a grateful look.

"So it is, my master."

"Now you must perform a mission for me, ere we set out together. I have procured the dress of a Moorish doctor, and I wish you to put it on, and after nightfall go to Ben Hamed's dwelling and see if you can discover which is the room Zehra occupies. Do you think you can do it?"

"I can but try."

"I thank you, Pedro."

"But hold a moment, my master," said the esquire, as a sudden thought flashed through his mind. "You won't go too far in this business?"

"Fear not for that, Pedro."

The honest esquire, though he entered fully into his master's plans, did not yet feel quite satisfied as to their probable result, and when he left the hostelry after dark, dressed up in his disguise, he did not fail to speak his misgivings; but the young knight had no thought of the danger, and Pedro set out upon his mission.

Two hours passed away, and Charles of Leon was becoming impatient, when Pedro entered his apartment.

"What luck?" anxiously asked Charles.

"I've found the room the girl occupies, and a tough job I had of it too. San Dominic, but those accursed heathens need to be punished. One pulled my robe, another pulled my pouch, while a third gave a twitch at my beard; and may I be blessed if he didn't come near pulling it clear off. San Jago, how my dagger itched!"

"But they didn't discover you, Pedro?" uttered the knight, with some anxiety.

"No. I kept my temper till I found out what I was after, and then I took myself off."

"Never mind. You may throw off your physician's garb now. You shall have a different one for to-night."

"Now, Sir Charles, this helping the Moorish girl away from the heathenish old king is all very well; but what are you going to do with her after that?"

The knight bit his lip.

"Of course you don't think of taking her to Leon," persisted Pedro.



"And why not?"

"Why not? Why, what would folks say of you? San Dominic! suppose the poor thing should fall in love with you? You know you are good-looking, and right handsome for a man, and it wouldn't be her fault, neither."

The knight smiled a faint, forced smile at Pedro's query, and with all due haste he changed the conversation.

It was near ten o'clock when Charles of Leon set out in company with his squire. He was habited in a rich Moorish costume, and Pedro wore a garb of the same description.

The knight carried a small lute beneath his arm, and as he passed out from his hotel, he looked carefully about him to see that he was not observed—or that no one was watching him. Having become satisfied on this point, he started off.

The two men walked rapidly until they reached the wall of Ben Hamed's garden, and here they listened to see that all was safe.

As no sound was heard, Pedro led the way to a small gate he had noted, and here they gained the garden without difficulty. With careful steps the knight followed his servant along through the shrubbery until they reached a small arbour near the house.

"There," whispered Pedro, pointing up to a window not far from the ground, where a lamp was burning, "that is the girl's apartment."

"Are you sure?"

"As sure as I am alive."

"Then you remain here. Let your arms be ready, but move not unless there is danger."

"San Jago! but there's danger enough already."

"Are you afraid?"

"No. But yet there's danger."

"So much the better. We ought to love danger by this time."

"I never could see the use of that, though if danger comes Pedro Bambino will be the last one to run."

"Yes, good Pedro. I know you have a brave heart."

"Yes, and it may be well for you, Sir Charles, that I have a cool head."

"Ah! Was that a step?"

"Yes. Draw back—back, Sir Charles."

A servant passed near the spot where our two adventurers were standing, but he was quickly out of sight, and when once again all was still, Charles stealthily approached the house.

At a convenient position he picked up a few small pebbles and threw them against the lighted window. Twice he repeated the experiment, and then he had the satisfaction of seeing someone approach the window.

The knight drew nearer, and taking his lute from its resting-place, he swept the strings, with a light touch, and then commenced a low, thrilling song, improvising as he went along. The words were meant for Zehra's ears, and ere long the window was opened. Charles hushed his lute, and bent eagerly forward.

"Who calls me?" asked the sweet voice of Zehra, at the same time looking down upon the figure that was revealed by the bright moonlight.

"Your Christian knight," returned Charles.

"Give me some token."

"The Darro. Can you not join me, Zehra? I would speak with you."

"'Twill be dangerous to you," returned the maiden.

"No, no. Think not of danger to me. Come to me, I implore you!"

"If the way is open I will."

The knight's heart beat with joy as Zehra disappeared from the window, and he moved out of the way to await her coming.

Pedro expostulated with his master on the propriety of thus calling the girl from her father's dwelling; but ere he could make any visible impression on the mind of the young man, the sound of a light footfall was heard, and in a moment more he sprang forth to meet Zehra.

Pedro was directed to remain where he was, to give warning of danger, and then taking the maiden by the hand, Charles led her out into the garden.

"I bless you that you trust me," said the knight as he gained a distant spot.

"And why should I not trust you?"

"You should; and in trusting me may I not feel that you love me?"

"I would love you if I dared," returned Zehra, with her eyes bent on the ground.

"And can you fear to love me?"

"Between the Christian and the Moor I know there have been happy loves," said Zehra; "and how can I think of one like you without warmer feelings than those of mere gratitude? But I should fear to leave my heart where it would be lost to me."

"Give it to me, lady. Let me have your heart, and in return you shall have one as warm and true as ever beat in human bosom. With us there is no time for dalliance. We are separated by walls that admit of no social concourse. If we speak, it must be to the point. You can love me and you will. I will be faithful and true."

"I am not to blame for a feeling that gives me joy," softly returned the fair maiden.

"Enough," uttered Charles of Leon. "And now for the future. You must go with me to Leon—to my own country."

"Will they be kind to the poor Moorish girl there?"

"Kind? Aye. You will be my wife, and who shall then dare to be otherwise than kind?"

"Oh, if I thought you would always love me, always—"

"Hush, Zehra. When I prove false to you I pray that my right hand may wither, and my heart dry up. You will go with me from here?"

"I can go the better, for I know that Ben Hamed is not my father. What is the matter, sir?"

"Nothing, nothing. Go on. How know you that he is not your parent?"

"By witty words last evening I drew him forth to confessions that opened to me the truth I sought. He spoke not plainly of this thing, nor did I straightway question him, but by slow degrees, while he thought I was aiming at the king did I aim at this, and he obeyed my wish without a suspicious doubt."

"And did you learn whence came the fountain of your blood?"

"No, I dared not question too much."

"You know nothing, then, save that Ben Hamed is not your father?"

"That is all, except that I am the price at which he holds his office."

"I would that you could have learned more from him," said Charles, in a thoughtful mood. "Have you no memories beyond your knowledge of Ben Hamed?"

"No."

For some moments the Christian knight's heart beat with a strange power. He looked earnestly into the face of his companion, as though he would have read her whole life-history from her features. His countenance was lighted up by a curious combination of love, hope, and anxiety, and he stopped in his walk as he lost himself in the labyrinth of his own thick-coming thoughts.

"What thought is it that possesses you?" asked Zehra, as she looked wonderingly up into the Christian's face.

"The thought was of you, lady; but it had no definite point. Yet I wish you could learn more of your early life."

"I know not where I should learn it; I must trust to time for that."

"Then so be it," returned Charles. And now let us turn to another matter. Did you know that Mohammed might alter his mind?"

"How?" uttered Zehra, somewhat startled by the question.

"That he might conclude to hasten this odious plan of his—that he might conclude to steal a march upon time, and take you sooner than you expect."

"Indeed, I believe him capable of it."

"And do you not think Ben Hamed would give way should the king demand you of him?"

"Yes, yes—alas! yes."

Before Charles spoke again, Zehra related to him the circumstances of her interview with Emina.

"I fear you can place little reliance on that," said Charles. "The queen is impulsive, and the sudden thoughts of the wrong she was to suffer made her frenzied. Zehra, you must flee with me, and that, too, as soon as possible. I will have all in readiness, and we will leave Granada."

It was some time before the maiden spoke. She uttered an objection, but it was tremblingly made, and while she hung upon the young knight's arm she listened to his warm pleadings with a quickly beating heart.

She spoke again, and again Charles of Leon pleaded. He told her of his home in Leon—of the bright flowers and brighter love that should be hers, and he softly swore that he would ever love her and cherish her, ever honour her, and ever be by her side to point out to her and guide her in the road of sweet happiness.

The gentle maiden leaned her head upon the young Christian's bosom, and in a soft, low whisper she consented to love and obey. She looked happy as she spoke, and Charles could see that she trusted him with her whole faith.

When the count turned towards Ben Hamed's dwelling, their plans for the future were all arranged. The time was set for their departure from Granada, and they seemed to forget that there might be obstacles in the way. They spoke as though the future were in

their hands, and that they could mould it to their will.

Pedro was glad to be relieved of his watch, and he assured his master that no one had been stirring. Zehra received one kiss from her Christian lover, and then she glided away towards the house, while Charles and Pedro took their steps carefully back towards the point whence they came.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ZEHRA glided carefully along through the passages that led to her apartment, and as she went her soul was filled by a variety of emotions. She did not suffer one pang of conscience for what she had done, for in her pure heart she believed she had only been seeking that happiness which by right belonged to her, but which had been denied to her by Ben Hamed. In Charles of Leon she had found one whom she could love—one whom she loved whom first she saw him, and the affections of her young heart had gathered about him as gathers the sunlight about the earth from the rising orb of day.

They had shot forth with that mysterious power which belongs only to love—a power which may never be surely analyzed, and which admits of no similes.

The maiden had nearly reached her apartment when she was startled by the appearance of a dusky form before her.

The moonlight found its way into the long passage through the windows of the tower that capped the building, and that light was just sufficient to show that the form that had appeared was possessed of life.

Zehra moved more quickly towards her room, and she reached it before the unknown came up. She hastily opened the door, but as she closed it she heard quick steps, and before she could move the bolt, a strong hand pushed the door back, and Ben Hamed stalked into the apartment.

The lamp was still burning which Zehra had left, and by its light the trembling girl could see that Ben Hamed had just come from without, as he was habited in his walking-dress.

"Zehra," said he, in a stern, threatening tone, "where have you been?"

"In the garden, father," she unhesitatingly answered.

"And what did you there?"

"I walked amid the foliage."

"Were you alone?"

The Alcalde bent a searching glance upon the maiden as he spoke, and he took a step nearer to her.

"Were you alone?" he repeated.

It was a hard question for Zehra. She knew not how to disobey Ben Hamed, and she knew not how to tell a lie.

"Were you alone?" asked Ben Hamed, for the third time.

"No!" tremblingly uttered Zehra.

"Ha! I saw two men leaving my garden as I came in. Who were they?"

Zehra almost wished now that she had told a lie, for she must either brave the anger of Ben Hamed or betray her lover. The former she feared, but the latter she was determined not to do. She knew but too well what might be the fate of the young Christian were he discovered, and she resolved to keep the secret. She knew not but that she might have been discovered in company with the young knight, and therefore she determined to tell the truth in what she did tell, and keep the rest to herself.

"Who were those men I ask?"

"I cannot tell," returned Zehra, bringing all her fortitude to her assistance.

"Beware girl. Tell me no falsehoods."

"I shall tell you none."

"Then who were those men?"

"I cannot tell."

"Do you mean that you will not?"

"It cannot matter what I mean else. I cannot tell you."

"By the holy Prophet, girl, I will not brook your stubborn disobedience. Once more I ask you, who were those men?"

"Ben Hamed, were your dagger at this moment pressed upon my bosom, I should give you no other answer."

"But you shall answer me—and let me tell you, too, that I have mistrusted your fidelity, and that sure measures have been taken against your disobedience. This very week you go to the king."

If Ben Hamed meant that to frighten Zehra into a confession, he was greatly mistaken, for it only served to nerve her soul with a stronger resolution.

"Now, Zehra, once more I ask you—who were those men?"

"You have my answer."

"Now, by Allah, I'll take you at your word," cried



## [ZEHRA'S DEVIANCE.]

Ben Hamed, in a fury of passion, at the same time grasping the maiden by the shoulder and pointing the dagger to her heart. "Answer my question, or this sharp steel shall drink your best blood! Answer!"

"Ben Hamed, your weapon frightens me not. Ah, press its point till it feels my heart, if you choose, and while I die I will tell you that it were far preferable to the arms of Mohammed. Strike me, Ben Hamed, but you will get no answer from me."

The Alcalde let his dagger fall upon the floor in utter astonishment. To see the maiden thus was what he could not have believed, and even now he doubted whether she were in her right mind. She that had ever been so coy and mild—so meek and unassuming—to see her thus puzzled his brain. He was at fault, for he would no more have dared to harm the maiden than he would have dared to cut off his own right hand.

"Zehra," he asked, at length, while he struggled hard to govern his passions, "do you know who those persons were, and were they not with you?"

"Do not question me farther, Ben Hamed, for I will not answer. Aye—strike me if you please, I can bear your blows."

Ben Hamed moved slowly back, and his features underwent a dark, lowering change. The passion settled into a demoniac feeling, and as he laid his hand upon the door-knob he said to the maiden:

"Keep your secret, but it shall do you no good. Now I know who it is that has been within my gardens to see you. It is Charles of Leon. But, by Allah, his head shall answer for it!"

Zehra forgot herself. Her woman's heart betrayed her, for as she heard these fearful words she uttered a quick cry, and started towards her guardian.

"Oh, harm not him!" she cried, clasping her hands together.

Ben Hamed smiled a grim smile.

"I've read your secret," he said; "what did the Christian dog tell you?"

"Nothing, nothing."

"I know what he told you: but he told you a lie!"

Zehra started, for there were now marks of fear upon Ben Hamed's features. His words were strange, and the girl saw that he was powerfully moved by other feelings than those of anger.

"What—what did he tell you?" repeated the Alcalde, letting go his hold upon the door and taking a step towards Zehra.

The fair girl hesitated, for her reason once more came to her assistance. She had no doubt but that Ben Hamed was confident that the young Christian had been to see her; but she knew that the secret of

the plans she had that night agreed to was safe. What the Alcalde meant she could not divine, though it was evident to her that he alluded to something of moment of which she was ignorant.

"You need not question me," the maiden at length answered.

"Then Charles of Leon dies! Mark me, girl—Charles of Leon dies! and you will soon be in the hands of one who has power to—"

Before Ben Hamed finished the sentence, Zehra had swooned and sank upon the low couch at her feet. The Alcalde was alarmed, for he feared that harm might come to her, and in that case he knew that Mohammed would hold him responsible. He sprang to her side, and sinking upon his knees he raised her head to his lap.

"Are you ill, Zehra? Speak to me."

The fair girl opened her eyes and gazed up into Ben Hamed's face.

"You are not ill," he uttered, while a ray of hope shot athwart his features. But it was a selfish hope, for its opposite was a fear of the king's wrath, and not a love for the girl. "Speak to me, Zehra. Tell me that you are not ill."

"I shall be better when you are gone."

"But before I go tell me what the Christian said to you," uttered the Alcalde, raising Zehra to a sitting posture, and then starting to his feet, a look of relief breaking over his features as he spoke.

"Nothing, nothing," murmured Zehra.

"He did!" cried Ben Hamed, at once moved and blinded by the passion he could not curb. "He told you that you were not my child! But he told you a lie!"

Zehra raised herself to the ottoman that stood near her, and then gazed with a steady, burning look into Ben Hamed's face. She remembered how Charles had started when she spoke to him of doubts, and she now saw more clearly what might be the fears of the man before her, though she was of course deeply puzzled.

"Ben Hamed," she said, "you have promised that the Christian has spoken with me. On that point you must rest on your own surmises; but let me assure you that the idea of my not being your daughter was never breathed to me by other lips than your own; unless, indeed, the language of my poor old nurse might have been construed into that meaning. But that was years ago, and I have almost forgotten what she told me."

"You are my child," Ben Hamed said. "Your old nurse never told you that you were not."

"If I am your child then treat me as such," returned Zehra, wishing to have the interview closed,

and to that end expressing no doubt upon the subject.

"I will treat you as such; and more than that, I will teach you that I am a parent, and a parent's authority shall be over you till you feel the stronger power of your husband. You leave not this room again till you leave it for your home in the Alhambra. Whatever may have passed, thus far, you may keep to yourself if you choose; but you had better not whisper it to other ears than mine. I will leave you to your rest now, and you may settle the matter with yourself. From this moment a watch is set over you. You will not leave this place till I will it."

As Ben Hamed ceased speaking he turned and left the apartment. For some time after he had gone Zehra remained upon the low ottoman, but at length she started to her feet.

"Between the Christian knight and Ben Hamed there is some mystery," she said to herself, as she pressed her hand upon her brow. "Upon my soul's happiness I would stake the belief that Ben Hamed fears Charles of Leon far more than he dares to tell. I saw fear upon his face when he uttered his name."

As the fair girl sank into her own reflections her lips continued to move, but no sound came forth. Suddenly there came upon her features a bright, startling ray of light, and under its impulse she arose from the ottoman and went to a curiously wrought cabinet that stood in one corner of her apartment. She opened a door, and then drew forth a small drawer, which she took in her hand and carried to where stood the lamp. It was full of trinkets, some of them costly and magnificent, while others were simple and unpretending. She took out, one after another, the articles that lay uppermost, and laid them upon the stand by the side of the lamp. At length she reached the article she sought. It was a small golden crucifix. As the rays of the lamp fell upon it, its jewels sparkled with exceeding lustre, and for some moments Zehra gazed silently upon it.

"This my nurse gave me, and most assuredly she said it was my mother's," murmured the fair girl. "Yet it is no Moslem bauble. 'Tis the Christian's symbol of the Saviour Charles told me of. Was my mother a Christian?"

The words fell tremblingly from Zehra's lips, and as she pressed the crucifix to her lips, she sank back upon the ottoman and closed her eyes.

"Watch me! watch me!" she said, as she clasped the cross; "but I tell thee, Ben Hamed, you will need a thousand eyes to watch me as you wish."

(To be continued.)





## THE HOUSE OF SECRETS.

By LEON LEWIS.

### CHAPTER XXIX.

Oh, magic of love! unembellish'd by you,  
Has the garden a blush, or the herbage a hue?  
Or blooms there a prospect in nature or art  
Like the vista that shines through the eye to the heart?

*Moore.*

That happy minglement of heart,  
Where, changed as chemic compounds are,  
Each with its own existence parts,  
To find a new one, happier far!

*Ibid.*

DURING the two or three days that succeeded her parting with her boy, Miss Wycherly went about like one in a dream. She was colder and haughtier than ever to everyone around her, and Sir Wilton Werner did not venture to solicit an answer to his proposal of marriage, deeming her manner inauspicious, and not wishing to encounter a refusal. But he lost no opportunity of bestowing upon her delicate attentions, and, as she did not repulse them, a subdued sort of hopefulness crept into his manner that at least one pair of eyes did not fail to note.

As for Alethea, she had quite forgotten the baronet's declaration of love and that the matter was still pending. She treated him with civility, but her thoughts were not with him nor with her guests. She forced herself to act the part of hostess with her usual grace, but the spirit that had animated her seemed vanished.

When alone she was very different.

Every post brought her a letter from town, and she retired to Arthur's secret rooms to read these missives, for they were from her boy. There was always a note from Richard Layne, but the principal enclosure was a boyish epistle, detailing the wonderful sights Arthur had seen, and the beautiful presents he had bought for those he loved. In every letter the little lad expressed a feeling of home sickness, and a desire to speedily return to his mother.

When Alethea read these letters, her face was transfigured with joy and tenderness, and she always knelt by the side of his empty bed and prayed, with tears and sobs, for his welfare and happiness. She carried the missives next her heart, and in her moments of greatest coldness and haughtiness her heart throbbed against them with yearning love.

On the third day, when the Lady Leopold and her guests were gone to ride, Richard Layne rode up to the Castle, and was ushered into the reception-room, where Miss Wycherly awaited him.

### [A STRANGE DISCOVERY.]

"Thank heaven you have returned, Richard! Where is my son?"

"At my house, and as contented as you can desire."

"Then he has already forgotten me?"

"Forgotten you! Arthur could never do that. Poor little fellow! He has wept himself to sleep every night, although he strove manfully to conceal the fact from me. He seems to feel that this was no common separation, and talks continually of your grief on his last day at the Castle!"

Miss Wycherly walked across the floor agitatedly, pausing a moment at a distant window to obtain control of her emotions, and then she returned, saying, brokenly:

"Oh, Richard, how can I endure this separation? I have even less courage than my boy has! He is all I have in the wide world!"

"He is safe with me, Alethea!" replied Richard Layne, in a voice of gentle reproach.

"I know it—but no one can love him, or care for him like his mother! You may form new ties, Richard, and I and my boy will cease to be first in your heart, but my life will always be the desert it is now, and he will be the oasis around which clusters all that is beautiful or fruitful in it! It is worse than death to me to know that henceforth his innocent caresses will be lavished upon others than me—that in a few months I may be to him but a pleasant memory."

"But consider the lad's good, my dear Alethea. I have introduced him to my matronly housekeeper as my nephew, and her heart warmed instantly to him. He will lack no comfort which she can supply. He has made friends with my dogs, and when I left him he was in a fever of delight over the present of a Shetland pony."

"Are you sure the pony is quite safe, Richard? Arthur is so little used to riding."

"He is quite safe, Alethea," answered Richard, affectionately. "The boy, I doubt not, is at this moment riding about as grand as a king. I intend to instruct him myself in his studies, as soon as he begins to feel quite at home. He shall be educated to fill any position in life which you may choose for him, and when he shall come of age I will give him back to you a man of whom you may be proud!"

"But he cannot always be first in your thoughts, Richard," remarked Miss Wycherly, gravely. "When you shall have taken a nearer and dearer one to your home, and other children begin to gather about your hearthstone, my boy will be less dear to you than they will be. I never thought of that side of the

question until since your departure to town. I have had many new ideas within the last three days!"

Richard Layne blushed consciously, and replied:

"I scarcely comprehend you, Alethea!"

"I will be very frank then, dear Richard. I alluded to the probability of your marrying. A man like yourself, with a love for social intercourse and family endearments, cannot go on in lonely bachelorhood for ever."

"But I have no thought of marriage."

"Why not?"

Richard hesitated, and then stammered something about devotion to Miss Wycherly and Arthur.

"I cannot permit such a sacrifice!" declared the lady. "Are we not as brother and sister, dear Richard, and could any sister ask of her brother that he should remain single always for her sake? Such a request would be preposterous. No, Richard, I shall be happier when I know that you are married to the one you love!"

"But I shall never marry!" protested Richard, sadly.

"Then you will wrong yourself, as well as another. You are in love, Richard, else why should you carry a lady's handkerchief in your bosom? Did you think I did not see you pick it up that evening in the glade? I have read your secret, my dear brother, and it is my most earnest wish that you should marry the Lady Ellen Haigh. She is good and beautiful, and well worthy of you!"

"I know it, Alethea. But I feel that I ought to remain single for your sake. It was through me that your life was made what it is, and I owe you every atonement in my power!"

Miss Wycherly showed that she was touched by this declaration, but she hastened to answer:

"I have no right to take advantage of your generosity. If you were the cause of my life-long unhappiness, you were innocently so, and it was not your hand that brought ruin upon me. Promise me, Richard, to declare your feelings to the Lady Ellen at the first favourable opportunity. She need know nothing of our past, nothing of Arthur, nothing of your relations to me. If she loves and trusts you, explanations may be deferred until Arthur shall be grown!"

"No one shall ever know anything of the great secret from my lips, dear Alethea. The secret is not mine to impart!"

Miss Wycherly continued to urge him, and her solicitations were so in accordance with the longings of his own heart, that he finally consented to make a proposal of marriage to the Lady Ellen.

"Ah! I had forgotten!" he said, suddenly. "Arthur has sent you a gift—the very first he purchased in town!"

He drew from his pocket a tiny box, which Miss Wycherly opened, finding it to contain a ring.

It was a slender circlet of fine gold wire, twisted at the top to hold a beautiful though rather small diamond.

"It is a little gem, is it not?" he asked, sharing her delight. "I had no hand in its selection. Arthur chose a ring for you, that you might always wear it, and so keep him in mind continually, as he said!"

"There was no need of a ring for that! The boy is scarcely out of my thoughts a moment during my waking hours, and when I sleep I dream of him!" said Miss Wycherly, putting the ring upon her finger, which it fitted perfectly. "It is a beautiful gift, and you must thank him for me, Richard!"

Richard promised, and then drew out another box, a much longer one, which he said contained a present for Alison.

This proved to be a fan, rose-coloured, and glittering with spangles, and fringed with pink down, a fan more suitable to a party-going lady than to a staid, elderly serving-woman.

Miss Wycherly regarded it smilingly, and remarked that Alison would prize it beyond anything else, and that she would consider it faultless.

"I shall take Arthur to the hidden cottage to-day," said Richard. "He has books for the school-master, a work-box for his wife, a doll for Ally, and toys for the boys—enough presents to set good Farmer Perkins's family wild with joy!"

"What did he buy for himself?"

"Nothing. He said he had enough of everything, if he could not have you! I would like to bring him over to the Castle with me, as my nephew, Alethea. He asserts that you are his mother, and that he will never call you anything else. So he chooses to remain perfectly silent about you, as I assured him that to mention your relationship to him would cause you trouble!"

"My poor little son!" murmured the young mother, softly.

"He needed little teaching to learn to call me 'Uncle Richard.' The new name will soon come quite natural to him."

They continued to converse of Arthur, Richard endeavouring to make the lad's circumstances appear as pleasant as possible, but now and then some indication of Arthur's mourning for his mother escaped his lips, wringing Alethea's heart.

The conversation drifted back to the Lady Ellen Haigh, and Richard confessed that his heart had been captivated by the sparkling young widow, and that he had thought of leaving the neighbourhood during her stay in it, since he had believed marriage to be impossible to him.

They were discussing this subject when the riders returned, and they went upon the porch to meet them.

Lord Waldemere was in attendance upon the Lady Ellen, and he willingly yielded his rights to Richard Layne, who lifted the young widow from her horse, whispering a request that she would grant him an interview in the library in the course of a few minutes.

The request was granted in blushing confusion, her ladyship's conscious heart indicating to her the cause of the request, and she ran into the Castle, avoiding the gaze of her friends.

Lord Waldemere marked the whisper and the blushing assent, and looked in surprise at Miss Wycherly, who had laid her hand upon her niece's arm. His eyes caught the sparkle of the diamond that glittered upon her finger, and his gloomy imagination suggested it as the token of an engagement between her and Sir Wilton Werner.

"It is all over, then, between her and Richard Layne," he thought. "She has accepted another lover, and he would marry poor Lady Ellen Haigh! What can it mean? Are they endeavouring to blind my eyes?"

He strode moodily into the great corridor, and hastened to his own apartments.

Miss Wycherly retired to the reception-room, the guests going to their own chambers, and after the lapse of an hour she was joined by Layne.

He was flushed and smiling, and had scarcely closed the door before he exclaimed, joyfully:

"Congratulations me, my sister! The Lady Ellen has accepted me!"

"I do congratulate you, Richard, with my whole heart," said Alethea, with hearty sincerity. "You deserve your happiness! When shall you be married?"

"Lady Ellen has not decided. She will finish her visit, and then go directly home to make preparations for our wedding. As our acquaintance has been brief, we have decided not to announce the engagement until after she leaves the Castle?"

"You are quite right!"

"I wish that you might be as happy as we are," said Layne, regretfully. "Oh, Alethea, if I could do anything to clear away the shadows that surround you—"

"You cannot, Richard, and we will not talk of them. My sorrows must not be intruded upon your joy. I hear the marquis's step in the hall," she added, nervously. "You had better go."

With many loving messages to her boy, she dismissed Layne, and watched from the window as he rode gaily down the avenue.

From that hour, Miss Wycherly was conscious of a closer scrutiny upon her every word and action by the Marquis of Waldemere. He did not appear to watch her closely, but she often detected his stealthy glances searching her face, as if he would read her very soul. He conversed more with the ladies, showed more of a social spirit with the gentlemen, was scrupulously polite to himself—and she alone saw the menacing storm in his surly dark eyes, that storm that might at any moment burst upon her.

Thus several days passed.

Richard Layne came to the Castle every day, ostensibly to discuss the proposed tableau; but really to convey Arthur's letters to his mother, and to spend an hour in the company of the Lady Ellen Haigh.

Miss Wycherly was convinced that Lord Waldemere knew of the reception of every one of these missives. More than once, when Richard had pressed a letter into her hand, she had looked up and encountered his lordship's apparently careless gaze. She comprehended that he must think the letters from Layne himself, since he could not know that Arthur had been taken from the Castle, and her heart grew sick at the thought.

The day after she had arrived at this conclusion, she received a visit from Farmer Perkins's wife, who informed her that Lord Waldemere had visited the hidden cottage that morning to learn if Arthur were there.

Not finding him, his lordship had remarked that he knew him to be still at the Castle, and had ridden furiously away.

Feeling that her boy was safe from any harm at the hands of her enemy, Miss Wycherly resigned herself to whatever fate might have in store for her, yet resolved to do battle with her foe to the very last.

But the first blow was not aimed at her.

Nearly a week after their betrothal, the Lady Ellen Haigh stood upon the porch waving a gay adieu to her lover as he rode down the avenue. She watched him as he passed out of the great gates by the lodge, and was about to return to the drawing-room, when Lord Waldemere approached her.

Richard had scarcely mentioned his lordship's name since the occasion upon which he had owned to the young widow that he was personally connected with the mystery surrounding the marquis, and the Lady Ellen's interest in Lord Waldemere was consequently greater than ever.

She greeted him cordially, making room for him beside her, and addressed to him a laughing greeting.

He returned it with unusual gallantry, and said, carelessly:

"I see you have been admiring the horsemanship of Mr. Layne. He is a fine rider!"

"Yes, he is an excellent horseman," replied the Lady Ellen, surprised that the marquis could praise his avowed enemy, and resolving that she would inform Richard of his lordship's generosity.

"He does everything well," observed Lord Waldemere, the faintest undercurrent of a sneer in his voice. "And he succeeds in everything he undertakes. He is a great ladies' man, is Richard Layne."

"Perhaps because the ladies admire one who does everything well, and who is always successful," said the Lady Ellen, with a pleased smile.

"That boyish face of his has won him many friends. I have sometimes wondered how women can prefer one of those fair-haired, blue-eyed men, with his mirth and humorous sayings."

Her ladyship did not think it necessary to eulogize blonde beauty, seeing that the nobleman addressing her was nearly as dark as the swarthy Moor, Othello.

"His friends are not all feminine," she observed. "All the gentlemen here like him, and feel the fascination of his manner. He is so obliging, so kind, so willing to devote himself to the general happiness, as in this affair of the tableaux. He has given up two favourite parts to others. But why should I praise Richard Layne to your lordship? Even you have felt the charm of his great good-nature, for you were once his friend."

A shadow black as night swept across Lord Waldemere's face at this allusion, but it was succeeded by a strange smile, as he answered:

"Yes, I was once his friend. But I discovered his baseness—I beg your pardon, Lady Ellen—it is enough to say that I am now his enemy!"

"So Richard told me," said the young widow, sadly.

"As you begged my pardon just now for speaking ill of Richard, I fancy you must have guessed that he is more to me than a friend! Years ago, he said, you and he were friends—more than brothers. Is there not a vestige of the old kindly feeling remaining?"

"Not a vestige!" returned the marquis, with a discordant laugh. "I hate him more strongly than I ever loved him!"

The Lady Ellen shuddered, and said, simply:

"I do not see how anyone can hate Richard—particularly if they have ever known and loved him. He has the noblest sentiments, the kindest heart, and the most unflinching good-humour. I do not know the cause of your hatred to each other, nor do I desire to learn it. But I should like to uproot it. I will not deny that your constant gloom has awakened my sympathy, and I would like you to have the friendship of so good and true a man as Richard. And he would be benefited equally by association with you!"

Lord Waldemere averted his head in silence, and her ladyship, wondering at her own audacity, but deeply in earnest, continued:

"It would give me great happiness to restore to Richard the friend of his youth. Why may not the blood he shed at your hands in the fountain glade wipe out whatever of wrong or misunderstanding lies between you?"

"Nothing could ever wipe out that wrong!" said the marquis, mournfully, yet with a certain fierceness. "I could forgive and be friendly with the highway robber who might take my wealth; with the pirate who should compel me to walk the plank in mid-ocean; with the assassin who should creep behind me to strike out my life—with all these I could be friendly far easier than with Richard Layne!"

"But why?"

"Because he robbed me of all I held dear on earth," answered the marquis, in a low, concentrated tone; "because he wrecked my happiness; because he struck out my life of life! He was robber, pirate, and assassin in one! He found me happy, hopeful, joyous. He left me what you see!"

The Lady Ellen shrank before the fierce manner of his lordship, and falteringly inquired:

"Can there not be some mistake? There must be," she added, energetically. "Richard is not the base man you think him!"

"He is all, and more! I will not pain your ears by a recital of what I have suffered at his hands. You might refuse to believe me. I should not blame you if you did!"

Richard's betrothed did not defend him as she would have done if another than the marquis had assailed him.

Her pity for his lordship, her dread of the mystery connecting her lover with him, her remembrance of the old tie that had existed between them, prevented her speaking warmly in Layne's defence.

Yet her silence was not felt to be acquiescence.

Her deprecating looks, and the subdued flashing of her eyes, spoke more plainly what she felt than words could have done.

"My dear Lady Ellen," said his lordship, so sincerely that she was forced to give heed, "I am much older than you—older in years, and far older in experience. I have learned in the hardest manner that a smiling face does not always indicate a noble heart, and that pleasing features are not always the sign of excellent principles. You will pardon the lesson I would give to your youth, on account of my superior age."

"But, my lord, all handsome people are not bad! Goodness and ugliness are no more allied than goodness and beauty. Richard's features are not perfect, and the only beauty he can claim is that of a pleasing, good-natured expression. Oh, I wish you would let me bring you two together!"

"Never in friendship!" exclaimed the marquis, fiercely, a sudden remembrance paining him to the heart's core. "He robbed me of the only woman I ever loved, and turned from me the heart that was mine! Why he didn't marry her, I don't know. There was nothing to prevent—nothing!"

The Lady Ellen felt giddy and ill.

Richard had assured her that he had never loved before, and she had believed him.

She was about to question his lordship, when, having given his warning, he turned on his heel and entered the Castle.

He had scarcely vanished, when Miss Wycherly, calm and cold as an ice-berg, glided out to the porch, and rallied the young widow upon her sadness, adding:

"If Lord Waldemere has been speaking against Richard Layne, my dear Lady Ellen, you need not be troubled by his statements. I was coming out to you when I fancied I heard him saying that Richard had loved someone whom his lordship had loved. The statement is false. I have known Richard all his life, and I know that he never loved anyone as he loves you!"



The Lady Ellen was reassured by this assertion, and shook off her momentary sadness, declaring that she had been shocked but not convinced by the words of Lord Waldemere.

CHAPTER XXX.

I am alone; and yet  
Is the still solitude there a rash  
Around me, as were met  
A crowd of viewless wings. G. W. Bethune.  
To go in dreariness of mood  
O'er a lone heath, that spreads around,  
A solitude like a silent sea,  
Where rises not a hut or tree,  
The wide-embracing sky its bound!  
Oh! beautiful those wastes of heath,  
Stretching for miles to lure the bee,  
Where the wild bird, on pinions strong,  
Wheels round and pours its piping song,  
And timid creatures wander free.

Mary Howitt.

On the morning subsequent to Roke's visit, Natalie set to work earnestly to prepare herself for the exalted position which she believed would soon be hers. She unpacked her boxes, putting the books into a case in her parlour, and placing the music upon a suitable stand beside the piano. Her clothing was deposited in a closet off the bed-chamber. Being of a methodical disposition, and thoroughly anxious to improve herself in all the required branches, she next, with paper and pencil, portioned off the hours of the day and evening, assigning particular duties to each. She determined to rise early, to put her rooms in order before breakfast, to take an hour's ramble after the morning repast, and to devote the remainder of the forenoon to her school-books. The afternoon to be spent in practising her music, with an hour's leisure before the six-o'clock dinner. After dining, an hour or two to be spent in walking, conversing with Linnet, &c. The evening to be occupied with needle-work, or in reading the novels that had been included among her books.

This was to Natalie a very attractive programme, and she copied it neatly and distinctly, and fixed it upon the wall over her study-table, which was already strewn with books.

The earl, finding that she had considerable taste for the art, had taught her something of drawing during his stay at the cottage near the Grange. In unpacking the boxes, Natalie found a portfolio well supplied with drawing-materials, with patterns for copying, and this was granted a separate table, and an hour was assigned to its use.

Her arrangements thus made, Natalie acted upon them with praiseworthy activity. She had no watch to mark the hours, but Linnet was frequently dispatched to the housekeeper's room to learn the time by the old-fashioned clock there. The crazed girl was never happier than when attending upon her young mistress, unless when allowed to sit by her window and divide her attention between the birds and flowers upon the moor and Natalie as she bent over her work.

Of all her studies, the earl's young wife most disliked arithmetic. She knew its simple elements, could multiply or divide with moderate rapidity and accuracy, but she detested the study of fractions, &c., and a smaller portion of time was given to this branch than to any other. Singularly enough, Lord Templecombe had insisted upon a thorough knowledge of arithmetic, probably to keep his wife's mind upon other objects than himself.

One morning Natalie pored over the detested book, slate and pencil in hand, with tears of vexation standing in her blue eyes. She had tried again and again to solve a difficult problem, and at last she exclaimed aloud, sobbingly:

"I never, never can understand it! I wonder if all countesses are obliged to learn it. I cannot see any sense in it, and I don't believe anyone else can. What good can it ever do me to learn the double rule of three, ratio, per centage, and how to find the area of a trapezoid? If titled people converse about such things at their parties, I am willing to be considered a dunce. I shall not touch that book again until I have an instructress!"

This resolution was uttered with dawning energy, and she concluded by tossing it to the back of the table, where it fell behind a pile of novels.

"Nata-lee, Nata-lee!" said the plaintive voice of poor Linnet, who had been regarding her with wondering pity, "come and look at the pretty birds, and see the sunbeams. They are chasing each other over the moor, as merry as fairies!"

Natalie could not resist the invitation. She went to the window, threw herself upon the couch, and idly followed the indication of Linnet's fingers, as she pointed out the brightest, boldest, and merriest of the sunbeams, which she declared to be their queen.

Tired at last of following the daft girl's exhausted fancies, Natalie bethought her of the packet of letters she had brought from the Castle, and which

she had not looked over since her first day at the Fens.

Taking them out, she engaged in their perusal, Linnet lapsing into silence and becoming forgetful of her presence.

The packet comprised letters that had been written at "Mount Rose" by Amy Afton, and contained the most minute particulars of her daily life.

Natalie read them with all the curiosity natural to a daughter who has known nothing of her parents, and the slightest allusion in them had to her a sacred interest.

"Mount Rose must have been in a lonely spot," she soliloquized, after perusing two or three of the letters. "My poor mother talks of the budding and blossoming of her flowers as though they had been personal friends. She tells of her serving-woman's kindness, as though she had been her only servant and companion. She speaks continually of her little child—of me," and tears came to the young wife's eyes, "as if her chief occupation in his absence were in watching the growth of her baby's teeth, and in teaching it pretty ways to delight him on his return. She could have had no neighbours, for she speaks in one letter, as a great event, of seeing a carriage pass the cottage. I would like dearly to know where Mount Rose was situated. I would make a pilgrimage to the spot some time, in company with Elmer. I should like to take him to the house where I was born and tell him of my relationship to himself!"

Resuming her pleasant, yet painful task, the young wife's heart seemed drawn in tenderness towards her mother, who had died in her youth, and in sadness and shame so strongly in contrast to the joy and happiness pervading her letters.

She hoped to obtain a clue to the locality of Mount Rose, and at last succeeded, finding a paragraph to the effect that the serving-woman had been over to Carefort three days in succession without bringing a letter for her mistress. Then was added a loving reproach, but Natalie paid no attention to that, murmuring:

"Carefort! The name is now to me. It must have been the town, or hamlet, nearest to Mount Rose. Carefort! Carefort!"

"Care-fort!" echoed Linnet, rousing from her vague dreams. "Is the agent coming, Nata-lee? Do you see him?"

"No, dear."

"But he must be coming, Nata-lee? He always comes from Care-fort, and I heard you say—"

"Is it possible that the town nearest to the Fens is Carefort?" exclaimed Natalie. "Then Mount Rose, the place where I was born, must be within a radius of twenty miles. Did you ever hear of a house called Mount Rose, Linnet?"

The housekeeper's grand-daughter replied in the negative.

"It is strange!" said the young wife, in a flutter of excitement at her discovery. "I did not think to ask the name of the place where we left the train and hired the carriage to bring us here. And within a few miles of that place is the house where my dear mother lived and loved! Perhaps your grandmother has heard of Mount Rose, Linnet!"

Acting upon her own suggestion, the young wife hastened down to the housekeeper's room and inquired of old Elsieph if she knew aught of "Mount Rose," but the old woman could not hear her, and returned such unsatisfactory answers that her mistress soon returned to Linnet.

"I feel too excited to study to-day," she said, smiling. "I shall need a day or two to recover my balance, and get used to the fact that I am not far distant from my birthplace. Oh, if Elmer were only here! I would urge him to set out on a search this very day, though, to be sure," she added, more soberly, "the house may have been altered years ago, the name changed, as well as the owners. Shall we walk, Linnet? It is too pleasant to remain indoors!"

The daft girl accepted the invitation joyfully, and ran to get ready, while Natalie tied on her broad-brimmed sun-hat, and threw over her shoulders a thin white cape, that had been included among her gifts from her husband.

"Adieu to my old school-books for to-day," she said, as she paused and looked back from the threshold of her parlour. "I wish I could say adieu for ever to that odious arithmetic and that detestable philosophy! I almost believe they are not necessary to me, but that Elmer wants to make my path as difficult as possible."

Unconscious how nearly her petulant surmise had approached the truth, she closed the door behind her, and ran gaily down the stairs, joining the patient Linnet upon the porch.

They took their way towards the moor, but had scarcely passed beyond the gate when the old housekeeper called after her grand-daughter, bidding her return for a luncheon she had already prepared for her mistress.

It was neatly put up in a small basket, and Linnet took it on her arm, and hurried back to Natalie.

"We shall have a nice time, Nata-lee!" she observed, as they walked leisurely along. "The day is so soft and pretty. What a pity that the cold winds should come by-and-by and frighten away my birds and sunbeams, and frighten my pretty flowers to death!"

"They will not come for a long time, Linnet," returned the earl's wife, soothingly. "We will enjoy the brightness and warmth, without thinking of a coming winter. We will have a nice long ramble to-day, and bring home a basketful of flowers."

"Will we? The prettiest flowers grow at my nest, my pretty nest, where no one goes but Linnet. Will Nata-lee see my nest to-day?"

"Is it far?"

"Not very far, when you run and dance over the moor, and play with the sunbeams," was the not very definite reply. "We will walk and walk, and by-and-by we shall come to my nest, Nata-lee."

Feeling a spirit of adventure in her restlessness, Natalie signified that she would visit Linnet's nest, and learn where she had spent so many days and nights when away from the Fens.

She expected to be shown some flower-thatched hut, in the midst of the moor, the work, perhaps, of some sportsman's hands, but beautified by the daft maiden, and she was prepared to admire it to Linnet's complete satisfaction.

The morning was so clear and bright, the air so pure and fragrant, as it swept towards instead of from the marsh, that the young mistress of the Fens experienced a delight scarcely inferior to that of her humble companion.

They wandered on like a couple of innocent children, plucking flowers regarding the animal life that abounded on the moor, stopping now and then to take an orange or cake from the basket to satisfy the keen appetites awakened by the air and the exercise.

Linnet wove for herself a heavy flower-wreath, more fantastic than the one she had worn when Natalie had encountered her on the waste-land, the day of her arrival, and this served her instead of a hat. She desired to make one for her friend, but it was declined, yet so kindly that she could not feel hurt.

Wild as the birds around her, the girl flitted on, now faster, now slower, carolling and trilling to the feathered tribe, in notes as liquid and musical as their own, and they replied to her in similar trills, corroborating her assertions that they were conversing with her.

"I told them how I found you, Nata-lee!" she said, simply, with implicit faith in her declarations. "They answered that I must never let you go again, and I shall not. Pee-wee said—that big brown bird that is nodding at me is Pee-wee—that he loves you, and that he and I will follow you when you go away, and live with you always!"

Natalie expressed her pleasure at this resolution on the part of Linnet and her friend Pee-wee, careful not to disturb poor Linnet's illusions, lest she should destroy the only charm of her unbalanced existence.

Despite her vagaries and strangeness, the housekeeper's grand-daughter was a pleasant companion. It may have been on account of them, for, wrapped up in herself, she asked no questions about Natalie's history or intentions, and seemed not to look beyond the hour. It was enough for her that she had a living picture to look upon, someone of her own age to whom she could speak, and to speak kindly in return to her.

And so they wandered idly on.

They had traversed four miles, as Natalie mentally calculated, and she was about to suggest that they should sit down to rest, preparatory to a return to the Fens, when Linnet caught her arm, crying out:

"Look, Nata-lee! There is my nest!"

The earl's young wife obeyed the direction, and observed, upon what appeared to be the edge of the moor, a gently sloping knoll, surrounded by a neglected hedge.

The knoll was crowned with a profusion of shrubbery and trees, now grown together in many places into a tangled mass.

Through the midst of the greenery pierced a slender chimney, and Linnet pointed it out with a note of triumph.

"The birds have their nests, and Linnet has hers!" she cried. "Come, Nata-lee!"

With bird-like eagerness, the daft girl sped on in advance of her friend, opening a little gate in the hedge, and calling on Natalie to hasten.

As Natalie entered the small garden she paused a moment to survey the scene, her companion standing silently, beside her.

The garden was square, and filled with rose-bushes, some of which were bare and dead, and others were laden with a profusion of odorous blossoms that elicited the admiring exclamations of Linnet. There were other flowers, grown wild amid the grass, but the roses, as Amy Afton's daughter observed, were the prominent feature of the garden.

From the centre of the garden, concealed under a

wealth of blossoming vines and ivy, and closely sheltered by the over-arching trees, across a tiny cottage.

Although small, it had an air of refinement about it that generally belongs to the domains of the wealthy. There was a pretty rustic porch in front, overgrown with vines, and the windows were highly ornamented, as could be seen through their leafy curtains.

Natalie was glancing at one of them when she observed what seemed to her a pair of eyes looking out at her. At the same moment she heard an exclamation that could not have been uttered by Linnet, who was plucking roses at her side—an exclamation apparently of surprise.

And then she was sure she saw a man's figure re-treating from the window.

"Who lives here, Linnet?" she inquired.

"No one but me, Nata-lee—me and the flowers!"

"But I saw someone in the room yonder, Linnet. A man was looking out at us!"

Linnet shook her head with an incredulous laugh, and ran lightly to the porch, trying the front door.

It was locked.

"It's always so, Nata-lee," she said. "It's been so ever since I knew it—this hundred years, I suspect. Let me show you Linnet's door."

She jumped off the porch, conducted Natalie to a side window, which she readily pushed up.

"Don't go in, Linnet," said her mistress, gently. "I fear some tramp may have got into the cottage. Do come away, dear, and we will gather flowers!"

Linnet shook her head, and climbed into the cottage.

Not wishing her to encounter alone any possible danger, Natalie followed her example.

The room in which she found herself was small and snug. It was quite bare, with the exception of a table and chair, and the dust lay thick upon them both.

"How many years must have passed since this place was inhabited!" said Natalie, sadly. "Who could have lived here? What made them forsake their pretty home?"

Linnet, who had passed into the adjoining room, called impatiently to her friend, and Natalie joined her. She was very anxious to display her "nest," which was soon found to consist of three rooms only, on the ground floor, with three chambers above.

A hurried glance into the lower rooms convinced the earl's wife that whoever might have looked out at them, no one was upon the ground floor at that moment.

Believing that the person might have retreated upstairs, she begged Linnet to refrain from going up, but the maiden was too anxious to exhibit the whole house, and did not heed her words.

So Natalie followed her.

Contrary to her fears, the upper rooms were deserted, but there were marks of recent occupancy in one of them, a mattress being laid upon the floor, and a blanket stretched neatly over it.

As Linnet paid no attention to this fact, when indicated to her, Natalie concluded that the poor girl might have occupied the room at some period during the summer, and did not urge the subject.

Indeed, she had begun to doubt that she had seen anyone at the front window, Linnet's scepticism on the matter having had its due effect.

The upper chambers were in part furnished with matting and cane-seated furniture, and had a very comfortable look. One of them was strewn with withered flowers, the favourite blossoms of the crazed girl.

"How singular that the house should be so deserted!" said Natalie. "Is it plague-smitten? What does this door open into, Linnet?" she added, trying a door that was locked.

"I don't know, Nata-lee. It's been shut ever since I knew it."

Impelled by curiosity, the unrecognized countess pulled the door with all her strength. The lock had perhaps never been very good, or time had weakened it, for it soon yielded to her efforts, and came open so suddenly as almost to throw her upon the floor.

Her effort resulted in nothing, but the disclosure of a closet well filled with books of every kind, and with a few other articles of little consequence.

Natalie took up one volume, but dropped it, exclaiming:

"A school-book! It seems that people were obliged to study them here years ago. I thought nobody had to learn dull things but me. Ah, what is that?"

She had found a novel—the "Evelina" of Madame D'Arbly.

With some comment upon it, she dropped it for a book of poems, gorgeously bound.

"Child Harold!" she said, delightedly. "I should like to take that to the Fens with me. And there are Scott's works! I have stumbled upon a perfect mine of wealth!"

Like all imaginative people, she was very fond of poetry, and she examined Byron's works, turning to the fly-leaf of a volume with aroused interest.

Then she uttered a cry that rang through the cottage—such a cry as she might have uttered had she beheld a visitor from the other world.

The cause of her excitement and agitation was a simple inscription, as follows:

"To Amy—The Ministering Angel of Mount Rose!"

Natalie stared at it, scarcely able to comprehend the fact that she was now within the cottage that had borne the name of "Mount Rose;" that the books before her had been conned by her lost mother; that she was kneeling within the very walls where she had first beheld the light!

Yet it was so.

An examination of the books confirmed it, many similar inscriptions upon the fly-leaves being found, and Natalie leaned against the door-post, faint and weak with the shock of the discovery.

Linnet was awed by the great emotion of her friend, and watched her pityingly, not daring to approach her, lest she should hasten her terrible transformation into the Madonna picture—a danger the poor girl began to apprehend.

Forgetful of her companion's presence, Natalie looked around her at the walls, at the decayed furniture, and then her gaze returned to the books.

"It seems to me as if I stood in the very presence of my mother," she murmured, softly, and with tears. "In this very room I must have been born. It was at those windows my poor young mother held me up to greet my father's return. The air seems alive with her presence!"

She bowed her head reverently, as if an unseen hand were resting in benediction upon it.

When the first shock had worn away, she gathered together the choicest of the books for transportation to the Fens, and discovered that they had been carelessly piled into a low, old-fashioned cradle—the very one, without doubt, in which her infant slumbers had been taken.

It suggested a picture to her of the elfin Amy, seated in her low chair, with one foot upon the rocker of her child's cradle, and with her eyes dwelling admiringly upon her husband, as he read aloud from one of those books; and the fancy was so true to what the reality must have often been that Natalie wept aloud.

"Don't cry!" said Linnet, pulling at her dress—"don't cry, Nata-lee! Your tears fall here!" And she covered her heart with her hand.

"Poor Linnet!" exclaimed Natalie, generously striving with her grief, lest the crazed maiden should sorrow with her. "I will not cry. Shall we take these books home?"

Linnet assented, and her friend resumed her search, coming at last upon a small pile of letters that, half-burned, lay in an old box. Nothing else of interest met her observation, and she put the letters in her pocket, took up her books, and signified her readiness to depart.

At the door she looked back into the room with a mournful gaze, thinking anew how like were the fates of mother and child, yet hoping, as the young always hope, that the present Lord Templecombe would render to her that justice which his predecessor had apparently denied to her mother.

Linnet carried a few books, as well as Natalie; and she led the way downstairs to the kitchen, declaring that she knew another way to get out, and that Natalie had not seen the back garden.

The earl's wife followed her in thoughtful silence.

On entering the little kitchen, she heard Linnet talking confusedly to herself, and learned, from her words, that her "nest" had really been invaded by some stranger.

A fire had been kindled in the fire-place, a tea-kettle half-filled with water stood in the corner of the hearth, a piece of bread and some meat were upon the table, and a tea-pot stood upon the wooden mantel-piece.

The back window was half open, and the bushes that had grown up before it were pushed aside, and broken in places, as if someone had leaped out in great haste.

No one was visible in the thickly grown garden.

"Yes, someone has been here, Linnet!" cried Natalie, nervously. "It was really a man I beheld at the front window! We must hasten away. Perhaps we are not safe here."

She took the hand of the crazed girl, and hurried her through the window, following as rapidly as she could, and they then sped through the garden, and out upon the moor, not slackening their steps until they had gained a safe distance from Mount Rose.

And then, seeing they were not pursued, they walked more slowly, the unacknowledged wife absorbed in thoughts of her strange discovery that day, and of the past with which she had just been

brought face to face; and Linnet trilling to the birds her sorrow at the unaccountable desecration of her "nest."

(To be continued.)

#### THE BEDS OF THE ROMANS.

THE beds of the Romans in the early days of the Republic were of the same description as those used in Greece; but towards the end of it, and during the Empire, when Italy acquired a taste for the various luxuries of Asia, the richness and magnificence of the beds of wealthy Romans far exceeded those used by the Greeks, splendid though they were.

There was scarcely any difference between the sleeping-beds of the ancients and their couches, except that the latter, being made for appearance as well as for comfort, were more beautiful and costly than the former. There were usually three persons to one bed or couch, the middle place in which was considered to be the most honourable.

These beds were unknown before the second Punic war. Until then the Romans sat down to eat on plain wooden benches, after the manner of the heroes of Homer, and, as Varro says, the Lacedæmonians and Cretans.

Scipio Africanus is said to have first brought from Carthage some of the little beds called *Punicani* or *Archæa*, which were very low, made of wood, stuffed with straw, or the like, and covered with the skins of sheep or goats. The comfort of these beds differed little from that of the wooden benches which they supplanted; but with them came the fashion among men of reclining instead of sitting at meals. The Roman ladies modestly adhered to the old custom during the time of the Commonwealth; but after the period of the first Cæsars they too ate on their beds.

Before the youth put on his *toga virilis* he was kept to the ancient rule as to seats; and when he was admitted to table he sat on the edge of the beds of his relatives. Suetonius tells us that the young Cæsars, Caius and Lucius, did not eat at the table of Augustus, but they were set "in imo loco," or, as Tacitus says, "ad lecti fulora."

From the simple pieces of furniture which we have above described, the dining-beds of the Romans were elaborated into most magnificent articles of decoration. Pliny tells us that they were sometimes covered with plates of silver, and adorned with the softest of mats and the richest of counterpanes. Sampridius says that Helio-gabalus had beds of solid silver; and Pompey on his third triumph introduced beds of gold.

The sleeping-bed of the Romans was generally rather high, so that persons entered it by means of steps. The bedstead was sometimes made of metal, and at others of valuable wood, or veneered with ivory or tortoiseshell; and frequently it rested on feet of silver or gold. The horizontal side-posts were connected by girths or strings, upon which the mattress or bed rested.

In beds intended to be used by two persons, the sides were distinguished by different names; the side at which the sleepers entered was open, and was called *sponda*; the other side was protected by a board, and was called *pluteus*. The sides of such a bed had two names—*torus* exterior and *torus* interior, or *sponda* exterior and *sponda* interior—from which expressions we may infer that two beds or mattresses were used, one for each person.

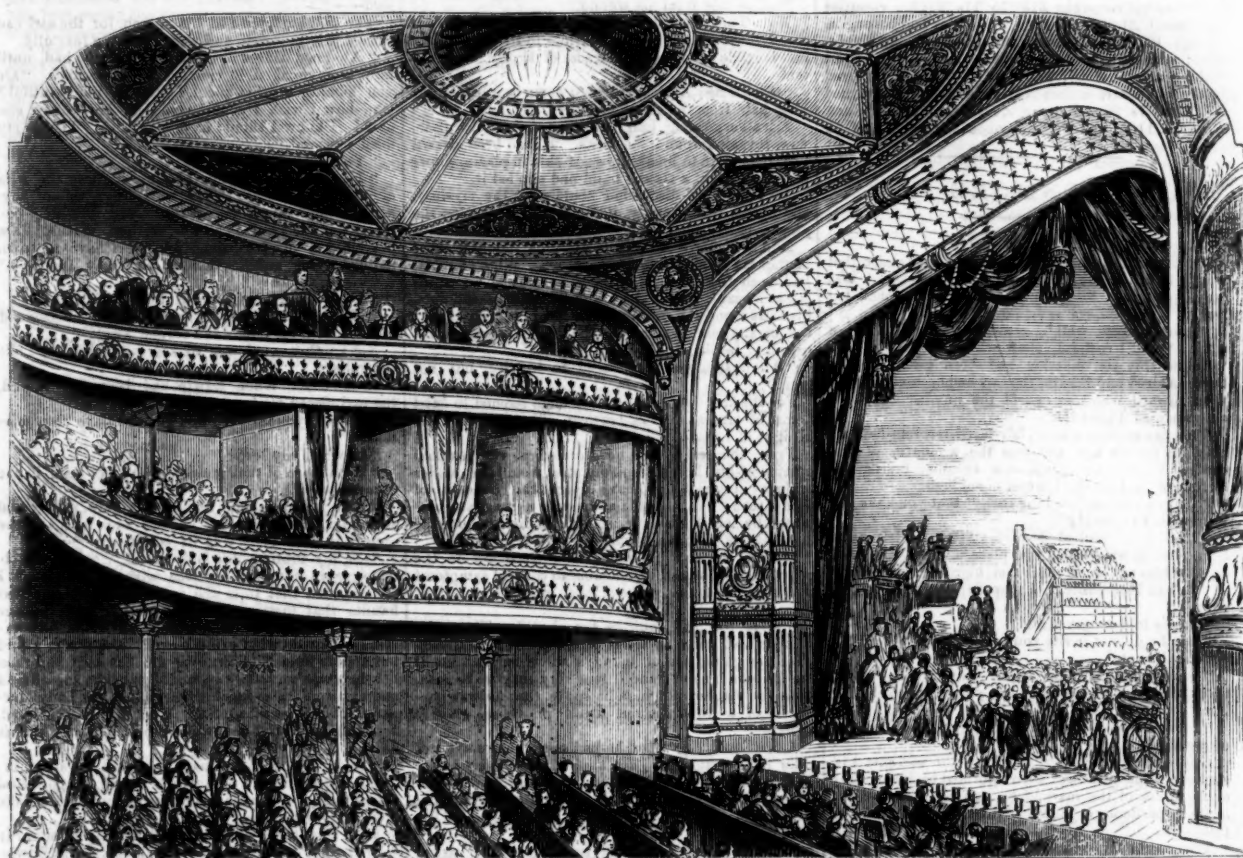
The mattresses were in early times filled with dried herbs or straw; but in later times the beds and pillows of the wealthy Romans were composed of wool, and still later of feathers. Those of the *inns* were stuffed with the soft down of reeds, as Pliny tells us.

The blankets or counterpanes and pillow-cases used by the upper classes were of a most rich description, and mostly of a purple colour, and embroidered with gold. Bed-coverings of this kind were called *peripetasmata Attalica*, because they were first used at the court of Attalus. It seems doubtful whether curtains or canopies were used in the *lectus cubicularis*, but probably they were occasionally employed.

A Missouri paper announces the discovery of a new oil in Pike county. It is obtained from bituminous shales, and from tests made, it appeared to be richer than petroleum and non-explosive; one hundred pounds of shale yielded three gallons of oil.

A few years since a small lot of shells (mother-of-pearl) was brought to Birmingham, which, either from ignorance or mistake, had not been cleared of the pearls at the fishery. A considerable number was found and sold, and one especially was sold by the man who had bought the shell for making buttons, for £10. The purchaser resold the same for a profit of £160, and we have heard it was afterwards held in Paris for sale for £800.





[THE HOLBORN THEATRE ROYAL.]

## THE NEW THEATRE.

THE opening of Mr. Sefton Parry's new theatre in Holborn on Saturday, the 6th of October, 1886, is refreshing when we consider that, although during the last twenty years our huge city has been adding supplement after supplement of towns of streets at every point, not a theatre has been added. The cause of this omission perhaps may have been the belief that to start a new theatre was synonymous with immediate ruin and an appeal to the Bankruptcy Court—at least, such was the sad experience of Hamlet, who built the Princess's, and of Braham, who built the St. James's, not to mention others.

The understood risk of opening a new theatre is perhaps the reason that central London should have been without a theatre for a century, the first and last being that for which Sir William Davenant obtained a royal patent in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Considering, then, that new theatres have been opened with success at Greenwich, Highbury, and in the east of London, it is remarkable that London, with its dense population, should within the last thirty years have to chronicle only the building of St. James's, by Braham; the Princess's, by Hamlet, who died in an almshouse; the conversion of old Covent-Garden into an opera-house; the enlarging and rebuilding of the Olympic in 1849; the reconstruction of the Adelphi in 1858, and the conversion of the dirty old Queen's Theatre in Tottenham Street into the now fashionable Prince of Wales's.

Despite the showing of past theatrical history, and the croakings of those who declare that no theatre is supported by the residents in its own locality, Mr. Sefton Parry, taking courage from his successes with the new Greenwich theatre, has "ventured his all" upon the erection of the new establishment in Holborn. The name of this new house is the Holborn Theatre Royal. It is built on the site of the old Post Office stable-yard, and has the advantage of three distinct entrances—one from Holborn, one from Brownlow Street, and the other from Jockeys' Fields. The buildings forming the stables and coach-houses of the old mail-carts were pulled down some five years ago. The site thus opened for building purposes offered an area of 15,000 ft., which for a period of upwards of three years remained vacant.

Mr. Sefton Parry, however, selected the site as one suitable for the erection of a theatre, and with the view to overcome the difficulties, the building was sunk some 11 ft. in the ground. This arrangement afforded many facilities, as it rendered the entrance to the pit and boxes more convenient—inasmuch as the pit is reached by a passage on a level with Brownlow Street, where also is the gallery entrance—while the access to the boxes is but a little above the level of Holborn, the stage entrance being from the rear in Jockeys' Fields.

Long before the walls of the building had attained the height of the enclosing wall, and before any opinion could be formed by the adjoining owners whether the structure would in any way interfere with the light and air over the old stable-yard, injunctions poured forth on all sides for redress of probable or imaginary wrong about to be experienced by the parties enjoying the privilege of obtaining light and air from their neighbours' premises. These proceedings delayed the building, and to a great extent precluded Mr. Parry carrying out his original intentions. The building now, however, is of the following dimensions:—From foot-lights to the back of pit, 70 ft.; width of pit between walls, 52 ft.; from foot-lights to back of stage, 57 ft.; width of stage, 52 ft.; proscenium, 26 ft. by 23 ft.; the height from the floor of pit to ceiling, 35 ft.

The internal arrangement of the theatre consists of four rows of stalls 4 ft. from back to back, pit seats 2 ft. 10 in. from back to back. It was originally intended that the first tier should be devoted to the dress circle—in the manner of the Haymarket Theatre. The idea was afterwards modified by Mr. Parry, and four boxes were formed on either side—the dress circle consisting of six rows of seats 3 ft. apart, facing the stage. The second tier has four slip boxes on either side, two rows of amphitheatre stalls, and at the back is a spacious gallery.

At the rear of the dress circle there is a convenient saloon for refreshment, and a ladies' cloak-room.

In the pit there is also a refreshment-saloon, and throughout the building are conveniences generally so deficiently provided in our metropolitan theatres.

The building is in the usual horse-shoe form, but has been carefully studied, so as to enable the audience from any part of the house to command a full and uninterrupted view of the stage; even from the

back seat in the gallery the footlights and orchestra are visible.

With regard to ventilation, there are numerous openings left in the most convenient positions to avoid draughts, which admit the cold air, while the heated atmosphere is allowed to escape into the roof by perforations left in the ceiling, the area of which amounts to upwards of 300 superficial feet; from the roof the vitiated atmosphere escaped into the open air by louvre openings. Doubting the sufficiency of such an ample provision, a sun burner has been introduced, which is usually of itself considered sufficient for ventilating any public building. The gallery, generally the warmest and closest place in the house, has the advantage of a thorough draught, there being openings all round, as well as ventilators in the ceiling. Taking into consideration the ample accommodation between the seats, and the provisions made for ventilation, there is little doubt that the present theatre will prove the most comfortable of our metropolitan houses.

The style of decoration consists in bulged box fronts with projecting ornaments, and at intervals shields, containing allegorical figures; the ceiling is panelled out by projecting ribs, at the intersections of which are small pendants. The proscenium decorations consist in a diaphanous ground with circular ribs running round same; the tinted decorations are pale salmon and white relieved with gold; the general effect is elegant and chaste, and the colouring judiciously applied.

**ELECTION EXPENSES.**—An abstract of the returns of candidates' expenses, and of the charges of returning officers for every county, city, and borough of the United Kingdom has just been issued. No accounts have been furnished from 31 constituencies, and with regard to 26 the abstracts are incomplete, but as far as the information goes the following results are shown:—Total amount of the costs incurred by candidates for counties in England and Wales, £315,666 11s. 8½d.; for cities and boroughs, £315,994 13s. 0½d.; for counties in Scotland, £32,244 11s. 11d.; for cities and boroughs, £19,431 13s. 5d.; and for counties in Ireland, £44,801 6s. 7½d.; and cities and boroughs, £24,610 4s. 2½d.; making in all £752,610 4s. 2½d. The charges made by returning officers in counties

(England and Wales) are stated at £15,655 8s. 8d.; and cities and boroughs £26,275 11s. 10½d.; counties (Scotland), £1,939 6s. 1½d.; and cities and boroughs, £1,206 12s. 4d.; and counties (Ireland), £2,239 5s. 8½d.; and cities and boroughs, £1,004 4s. 7½d.; making a total of £47,520 8s. 11d. The cost incurred by the candidates collectively at Lancaster is returned at £2,529 7s. 2d.; Reigate, £2,636 18s. 5d.; Totnes, £786 7s. 11d.; and Great Yarmouth, £1,638 18s. 7d.

## KENMORE.

### CHAPTER VII.

"You mean," said the lad, with an expression that might have become an experienced preacher, "that we ought not to speak our hasty judgment too freely."

"You reason well," returned Aldred, with a smile; "and I certainly shall not contradict you."

While this conversation had been going on between Aldred and Edwin, the earl had been conferring with Siward, who was one of the number that had accompanied Thorwald.

This Siward was a stout, fair-faced, resolute-looking man, of middle age, and was the armourer of the castle. He was not only a most excellent craftsman, but one of the best and bravest of soldiers.

"Do you tell me," said the earl, "that you have not been with Thorwald?"

"I tell you," replied Siward, "that he left us at Scome, when we reached that place a week ago, and we saw him not again until last night."

"He had been hunting, I suppose?" pursued Atholbane.

"So he told us, my lord."

"But he did not invite you to join in the sport?"

"He did not."

"Surely, Thorwald might have been more thoughtful of your comfort; but you must not blame him."

"I have no thought of blame, my lord, for any own comfort."

Before the main gate of the keep the earl met his step-son. The latter had been informed by his mother of the attack of the marauders, and he now sought further particulars, which Atholbane gave him in full.

Thorwald expressed horror and surprise and indignation, at the same time expressing the firm conviction that if he had been at home he would either have captured or killed the robber chief. And he furthermore declared that he believed that chieftain to have been none other than Olaf himself.

"You say you have one in safe confinement?"

"Yes," replied the earl; "he is locked up in one of the cells beneath the eastern tower. We will see him in the morning, and find if we cannot get some information from him. I think a proper application of the thumb-screws will open his mouth to some purpose."

Aldred again retired to the old chamber in the Ghost's Tower, but neither the palefaced woman nor the white-haired monk came to visit him, but he dreamed of them both.

Old Finlan, the warder, however, had something more than dreams to tell of when he saw his lord in the morning. He had seen a veritable ghost during the night. He had seen it in the corridor leading to the eastern tower. It was black as night, and as big as a tree.

The earl suggested that the corridor was not high enough in the arch to accommodate a very tall tree.

Whereupon the warder replied that ghosts could accommodate themselves to any space. They could fill a chamber, or pass through a key-hole.

Did Finlan follow the ghost?

No. There had been no need of it—in fact, no opportunity; it had disappeared—resolved itself into thin air—the moment it became aware that human eyes were watching it.

Atholbane did not laugh at his faithful old warder, as he might have done a few days before. He thought to himself, as he turned away, that some one of the mysterious inhabitants of the western tower might have paid a visit to the apartments of the opposite angle of the keep.

After breakfast Thorwald came and proposed that they should go down and see the prisoner. He had brought two stout servants with him, who would apply the instruments of torture, if such a course should be found necessary; and he expressed himself confident that they should learn all they desired to know. The warder went with them, carrying the keys and bearing a torch. The door of the cell was reached, deep down beneath the tower, and Finlan applied his key and threw it open.

The prisoner lay still upon the cold, hard flags, and when the earl spoke to him he made no reply.

"The man is dead!" said Finlan.

Had he died from his wound?

No. They turned the body over on its back. It was a ghastly-looking face, bearing in its purple lines and horrible corrugations traces of agony most intense.

"See!" cried Aldred, stooping down and lifting the long hair from the shoulder.

A leathern thong, half buried in the swollen flesh, was revealed round the neck. It had been drawn tightly enough to break the scarf-skin in places, showing plainly that a strong hand had applied it.

No amount of discussion could solve the mystery. Old Finlan was strongly inclined to believe that the ghost had had something to do with it.

And so thought Atholbane; but his thoughts went farther than did those of his warder. Who, or what, had been that ghost? When he was alone in his closet he sank into a chair, and bowed his head upon his hand; and the words which had been spoken by the mysterious presence in the blue chamber came painfully to his mind:

"Atholbane, you have need to watch; but not here!"

For the first two or three days there seemed to exist a sort of mutual distrust between Thorwald and the Knight of Lanark.

True, the latter had not formed a very exalted opinion of his host's step-son, nor would he, under ordinary circumstances, have sought the friendship of such a man; but, situated as he was, a guest at Kenmore, he felt it his duty, so long as he accepted its hospitality, to treat its inmates with respect.

During the day following the discovery in the prisoner's cell he had been unable to conceal symptoms that might be taken, without much stretch of imagination, for signs of enmity.

One of the first subjects broached by Thorwald, after he had come to terms of freedom and intimacy with the guest, was of the mysterious inhabitants of the Ghost's Tower; and it was very easy to be seen, from the manner in which he spoke, that he was possessed of a superstitious dread of those ghostly visitants.

Aldred told him what he had seen, but he did not enter into particulars. He simply assured his interlocutor that he had seen things for which he could account in no possible way, without admitting the presence of immaterial spirits in the chamber of the old tower.

"And are you not afraid to sleep there?" asked Thorwald.

"Why should I fear?" replied our hero, with a smile. "The spirits, if spirits they be, show no disposition to trouble me; and so long as they content themselves with coming and going, like the moon-beams and the sighing winds, I am not horrified."

Thorwald bowed his head, and walked silently away. He was troubled in mind, and cared not to show it.

One afternoon, as the earl and Aldred were conversing in the hall, Edwin joined them, and presently asked his father if the picture gallery were open.

"No, my boy," was the reply.

"Then why cannot you open it? I want good Aldred to see the pictures. He has never been in there yet."

"Perhaps he would not care to go in."

"I would not care," said our hero, "to task you beyond your inclinations; but if there be no objections, I should certainly like to see the pictures."

The earl smiled, as though with an effort, and as he led the way towards the staircase, he said:

"I have not kept you from the gallery, Sir Aldred, because I had my objections to your going there, but simply because I have not been in the mood for visiting it myself. It is a foolish whim on my part that has kept me out, and perhaps the sooner I overcome it the better. If you will wait here a moment I will get the key."

As they approached the door of the gallery Thorwald came out from his chamber and joined them, and when he learned whither they were going he proposed to bear them company.

"This is a portrait of my father," said the earl, pointing up at the picture of a stout, good-looking man, clad in a hunting-costume, with a dead stag at his side.

But Aldred did not hear what he said. He had observed another picture, and was gazing upon it with breathless eagerness. It was the portrait of a woman, young and beautiful, with golden hair and heavenly blue eyes, and with a form of perfect symmetry and grace.

"What is this?" he asked, in a whisper, as the earl approached him.

"Why do you ask?" returned Atholbane, himself visibly affected.

"It is the woman of the blue chamber!" answered Aldred, without removing his gaze from the picture. "It is her very face—the same—yes, the

same sweet mouth—the same celestial beauty. My lord—"

The knight stopped in his speech, for the earl had turned pale as death, and was trembling fearfully.

"Ah, good Aldred!" cried Edwin, who had, until now, been engaged in viewing the landscapes, "are you looking at that picture? Is it not beautiful? Oh! how I wish I could have seen her before she died! I know I should have loved her. That is my dead mother."

"Your mother, Edwin?"

"I call her my mother because she was the wife of my father before I was born. She is not my mother—she cannot be—because she died long before I had life; but I call her mother, because I am the child of her husband. I know I have my own mother living, and I love her; but Lady Maud—"

"Hush, my boy!"

"Lady Maud!" repeated Aldred, with a start.

"My dead wife!" said the earl, and he covered his face with his hands and turned away.

Not another word was spoken until they had left the gallery.

In the court, when Edwin had been left behind, the earl placed his hand upon Aldred's arm.

"Aldred, you do not think you can have been mistaken?"

"In what, my lord?"

"In the face of that presence you have seen in the blue chamber."

"I am not mistaken," replied our hero, slowly and solemnly. "I never saw but one such face, and the picture in your gallery is its counterpart."

"Oh, my brother, this is dreadful!" groaned Atholbane, again covering his face with his hands. "I am satisfied that it is the spirit of my Maud that haunts that tower. But why should it be? She was good and pure. Why should she suffer this unrest? Aldred, what can it mean? Oh, if she would but appear to me! She never did but once, and then her face was turned away, and I thought she sobbed and moaned. The spirit never came after Lady Margaret took possession of the blue chamber. Aldred, I would give all I am worth to know why this is so!"

"Wait, my lord; we may solve the mystery in time. I have now a clue which I have not possessed before, and if I can gain an answer from the mystic presence I will do so."

With this they separated, and shortly afterwards Aldred went down to the shore of the lake with Edwin. It was almost dark when they returned, and just outside the gate they met a man riding away on horseback.

"That is not one of our people," said the lad. "Do you know him, Aldred?"

"I did not recognize the features," returned the knight, "but I should judge, from the garb, that he was one of the followers of Earl Douglas."

"Very likely," said Edwin. "Earl Douglas is coming here."

"Coming here!" repeated Aldred, with a start.

"Certainly! Did you not expect him at the tournament?"

"Yes," answered the knight, vacantly.

"You forgot," pursued the lad, seeming not to have noticed the peculiarity of his companion's manner, "that my mother is his sister."

"I remember it very well."

"And I suppose Clara will come, too. You know Clara?"

"Yes."

"She is my cousin, and she is just my age. Only think of it—we were born in the same month; but Clara is a lady now, while I am but a boy. If I had not been weak and sickly, I should have been a strong man. Were you not strong when you were twenty years old?"

"Twenty!" uttered Aldred, gazing down upon the frail form at his side. "Is it possible? But—I remember—yes—you are twenty."

"But you have not answered my question, sir knight."

"Excuse me, Edwin. I am only five-and-twenty now. When I was of your age I was able to bear the heaviest armour and wield the axe which I now bear."

"You were never sick, Aldred?"

"Never in body."

"Oh, I wish I had been well. If I had been well and strong as you have been, I might have looked forward to the coming of my bride with joyful expectation."

"Your bride?" repeated Aldred, in a startled whisper.

"I call her my bride," pursued the lad, in an easy, confidential manner, watching the grass at his feet as he spoke—"I call her so, though we are not yet married. Didn't you ever hear of our betrothal?"

"I have heard something of it."

Edwin looked up, fancying that the knight's voice



was tremulous, but the gathering gloom prevented him from seeing the troubled expression; and he presently went on:

"We were betrothed when we were children. I don't think we were old enough to know anything about it at the time. My mother was very anxious, and I think my father liked the idea. If I had been strong and well, and Clara Douglas were to become my wife, considering that I am an only child, and that she is an only child, I might live to become lord both of Kenmore and Douglas. But—I don't know—I fear me I should make but a sorry husband. I am more like a child than a man. Do you think the lady would love me? You know her—is she kind and gentle?"

"As kind as mercy's sweetest angel—as gentle as the zephyr that fans the brow of evening, when the stars can see their faces clearly in the bosom of the lake."

Edwin raised his hand to his companion's arm and looked up again.

"Aldred," he said, "your voice sounded strangely low and sweet when you spoke those words. Have you ever loved Clara Douglas?"

There was no touch of jealousy in the question, only the simple curiosity of a child; but the effect was startling upon the Knight of Lanark.

He shook the boy's hand from his arm, and started back; but with a mighty effort he calmed himself, hiding his emotion behind the intervening gloom; and when he answered, his voice was steady, though not natural.

"As a true knight may love that which is far above him, I may have loved Earl Douglas's daughter. But come; the darkness is gathering, and your father may be anxious, and further, the porter may be closing the gates."

They were upon the bridge as the words were spoken; and just within the court they met the earl.

"Sir Aldred," said the host, as they walked together, "a courier has been here from Scome since you have been away, and he brings word that Earl Douglas and his daughter will be here to-morrow. The workmen have finished, and the apartments are ready. I ask you plainly—is there any ill feeling between you and Douglas?"

"On the contrary, my lord, there is the best of feeling."

"I am glad to hear that," cried the earl, joyfully. "I have feared that it might be otherwise. Earl Douglas has reared you as a son?"

"He has been very kind to me."

"And yet, if I have been rightly informed, you are in no way related to him."

"Not in the least, my lord. I thought you knew the story of my life."

"I heard it, I think, some years ago; but I thought little of it at the time. I saw you, as a child, at Lanark, and you were so bright, and buoyant, and happy, that I cared not whose offspring you were. You were to me as one of heaven's own beautiful creations, and I remember that you took to me, even then. Since you have reached the age of manhood your deeds of valour have marked you out for a true and gallant knight, and your parentage became to me, more than ever, a matter of little consequence."

"My lord," said Aldred, struggling against an emotion that came nigh betraying him, "my father is still living; and you must remember him well. He is Walthor, the old forester of Lanark. He was forester in the service of the old earl before the present Douglas was born. As the Lord of Lanark had no son of his own, he took a strong liking for me, and suffered me to make the inner apartments of his castle my home; and if I had been his own son he could not have taken more pains with my education."

"Then," cried Atholbane, cheerfully, "who can hold his head above you? In all that makes the immortal man you rank with the best in Scotland."

"Hush!" groaned Aldred, putting out his hand imploringly. He could sustain himself no longer. "I rank with nothing!" he added, seeking no more to hide his emotion. "I am like a poor hare that has been borne aloft by an eagle. The wings that have raised me are not mine by birth, and when they fall me I must fall."

"Aldred, has Douglas—has the king—"

"My lord, I pray you cease. No more of this if you love me. On the morrow I will be calm and composed."

And thus speaking, the youth turned away.

Atholbane watched him until his receding form was lost in the gloom, and when left entirely to his own thoughts, a glimmer of the truth broke upon him.

"Poor Aldred!" he murmured to himself, as he walked slowly towards the inner court. "I had not thought of this. But how is it with Clara Douglas?"

He stopped, and pressed his hand upon his brow in the old, painful manner—a manner that had become habitual with him of late—and thus he stood for some moments. At length he started on again, his hands clasped, and his lips giving words to his thoughts:

"I see trouble in this. Oh, poor human heart! No armour fashioned by the hand of man can shield thee from the pangs and sorrows of painful circumstance!"

# CHAPTER VIII.

THERE were great stir and bustle at Kenmore Castle when Earl Douglas arrived. He came just after noon, and a score of stout men-at-arms bore him company. Atholbane, Lady Margaret, and Thorwald were at the gate of the keep ready to welcome the earl and his daughter, and surely no welcome could have been warmer. While the host took Douglas by the hand to conduct him into the hall, Thorwald moved forward as though he would perform the same office for Lady Clara; but his mother put him gently aside, whispering a few words into his ear as she did so, and herself conducted the maiden.

Earl Douglas was a fine-looking man, in the prime and vigour of life; and the smoothness of his open brow and the clear light of his dark-blue eyes, betokened that he had as yet seen but little sorrow. His wife was an invalid, scarcely ever going beyond the walls of Lanark; but she was resigned and happy, suffering but little pain, and her husband, in the goodness of his heart, found much real comfort of soul in caring tenderly for her.

Clara Douglas, the only living child of the earl, was twenty years of age, of medium height, and of exquisite proportions; her movements all grace, and her bearing gentle and kind. Her face was not only the seat of one of the purest types of beauty that is vouchsafed to woman, but it was the mirror of an inner being all lovely and harmonious. And yet she was not without those signs of spirit and zeal that give fire to the eyes and lend a changeful radiance to the cheek.

As the company entered the large drawing-room Thorwald contrived to obtain a seat near to Clara, and a close observer might have seen that he gazed upon her with an earnest eye. He knew that the lady was affianced to his half-brother, and that he had no right to love her. He gazed as the coiled serpent might have gazed upon a bird of beautiful plumage.

He spoke to her, and his voice was unnatural—breathless-like and hushed—as though there was some part of himself which he wished to hide, and which his voice might reveal; but by-and-by he spoke more freely, and finally ventured to smile. Clara treated him politely; but she had not failed to notice those signs which he could not conceal, and she hesitated not to decide in her own mind that he was a dangerous man.

"I have not seen Edwin yet," said Douglas, as the conversation lagged.

"The youth is shy," returned Atholbane, with a smile. "I will go and find him."

The host arose and left the room, and when he returned, his son bore him company. Douglas could not repress the feeling of disappointment that was manifest in the shadow that flitted across his face as he beheld the pale, thin features and the slender frame of the youth to whom his daughter was affianced. He had hoped to see him looking stouter and stronger; but he had too much good-breeding to make farther manifestation of his disappointment, and he greeted the lad with cheerful good-will.

Edwin had not feared to meet Earl Douglas—he feared to meet no man, for his heart was in the right place, and in his bosom there was no guile; but he had dreaded to meet Clara, and when he saw her now, radiant in her healthful beauty, he would have shrunk away abashed had she not taken his hand with a sweet, sisterly smile, and spoken to him kindly and lovingly.

By-and-by Lady Margaret took Clara away to dress for dinner, and the two earls, arm-in-arm, went out into the court.

"My brother," said he of Kenmore, when they were where their voices could reach no other ears, "you have seen my son, and you have seen that he has not improved much in health and strength, but still I have hopes."

"I noticed it," returned Douglas.

"And I saw that you were disappointed," pursued Atholbane.

"Yes, I was disappointed, but I meant not to show it."

After a pause, during which the earl ascended to the parapet, Atholbane said:

"Listen to me, Douglas: I would not have our old compact become an uncomfortable burden upon you. My son is frail and weak, and he may never be strong

and well. Yet he is a good boy, true-hearted, just, and honourable, and as frank and generous as man can be. I love him, and I know that you would love him; but while you loved him you might also pity him, and surely the husband of your daughter should not be such as to call for pity."

"Go on," said Douglas, as his companion came to a stop.

"You know what I would say," Atholbane continued. "If you would find another husband for your daughter, I am willing that the compact should be annulled."

"Do you wish it annulled?" asked Douglas.

"No," replied the host; "it is no wish of mine. I am simply anxious—"

"That I should be called to bear no unpleasant burden from the fulfilment of our compact," finished the guest. "But you need have no such fear. So far as I am concerned, I hold to the original agreement. It was to unite the interests of Kenmore and Lanark. I do not believe that Edwin will ever grow to be a warrior, but by case and foresight he may enjoy many years of life, and become the father of healthy children. As far as they are concerned, I assure they will be happy in the union. I watched them when they met this afternoon. The youth was shy and backward—a sure sign of admiration and eager hope—while Clara seemed really moved by the spirit of love and devotion. So we will consider that point settled, and when we allude to it further it shall be for the purpose of making arrangements for the nuptials. Moreover, I think those nuptials had better not be long delayed."

Atholbane expressed the same opinion. The parties were old enough to marry, and perhaps it would be better that it should be done before the summer was gone.

Upon the bastion directly beneath the western tower they stopped, and after Douglas had viewed the landscape awhile, he asked his companion if Sir Aldred were at the castle.

"He is my guest," replied Atholbane, "and I wonder that he has not yet presented himself. I love him. I think he is true and honourable."

"He is more than that," added Douglas, warmly; "he is one of a thousand. And yet," he continued, lowering his voice and bending his eyes to the ground, "I sometimes think I did wrong in bringing him up from the humble sphere in which he was born. Aldred left me of his own accord, and yet I was glad when he told me he was going, for he did an honourable thing therein. He could not have remained safely beneath my roof any longer. His own peace of mind forbade it, and it may have been well for my daughter. I think you can readily understand that Aldred and Clara should not needlessly be thrown together while we remain here."

When dinner was ready Sir Aldred entered the hall where the guests were assembled, and Earl Douglas greeted him as he would have greeted a very dear friend. Then our hero turned to Lady Clara and extended his hand.

A close observer, who had been watching for slight tokens of feeling, might have detected in the quivering of the lips, in the drooping of the lids, and in the varying colour of those two faces, that there were emotions within which were purposely, and by strong effort, held in control.

And there were two persons gazing upon the scene who were looking for such betrayal.

On the following day the whole party took to horse, and rode into the forest upon a hunting excursion. Edwin had a mountain pony, a small, ambling animal, that bore a rider almost as in a cradle, and he enjoyed himself very much as he rode by the side of his beautiful cousin. She was kind and loving, and did all she could to make him happy, and ere long he came to regard her as a blessed angel, upon whose sympathy he could lean with confidence, and in whose truth he might repose every trust of his soul.

Earl Douglas watched the cousins, and fancied that the love which would make marriage happy had already dawned.

And even so thought Atholbane.

Thorwald gazed upon the scene, and his lowering brow showed that he was jealous of the attentions which his half-brother received, though it is doubtful if he shared the faith of the earls in the character of the maiden's sentiments.

He had soon enough to convince him that Clara Douglas's heart was no longer hers to give, and he was inclined to the opinion that this seeming fondness for the pale boy was but a veil hung out to blind those who might have an interest in watching her.

Lady Margaret, however, with a woman's instinct, came nearer to the truth.

She saw no guile in Clara's treatment of her son—nothing but what was natural and proper—and yet she did not believe that in her smiles and kind words there was anything like the promptings of that

wondrous love which the heart of a maiden gives to its chosen possessor and master.

She had known the maiden from childhood—she knew how kind and gentle and loving she was—and in all this she saw but the love which a fond and sympathizing sister might feel towards a patiently suffering brother.

The path which the hunters pursued had led them around by the northern shore of the lake, to the bleak crags at the back of Ben Lawers; and as they approached a cliff, the top of which towered high above their heads, the old forester, who rode in advance, waved his hand, and called attention to something perched upon the topmost pinnacle of the perpendicular height.

"It is a golden eagle!" cried Atholbane.

"Can you reach him with an arrow?" asked Douglas.

"It is doubtful, my lord. It is a long distance to the top of that cliff."

"The eagle does not stir," said Clara. "I thought they were shy and timid when in the presence of man."

"Ah, my sweet lady," replied Donald, "that fellow has two reasons for not troubling himself to get out of our way. In the first place, he probably fancies that his high perch places him entirely beyond the reach of harm at our hands; and, secondly, very likely his nest is in some of those broad fissures below him, with his mate in it, and he is keeping watch while she cares for the fledglings."

"Cannot an arrow be made to reach that point?" cried Earl Douglas, slipping down from his saddle. "By my faith! I think I have seen the long bows of Lanark do as much as that. Donald, give me the bow."

"It is a long shot, my lord, and a hard one, for the arrow has its whole weight to bear the entire distance."

"Is your bow a good one?"

"There is not a better in Scotland."

Douglas selected an arrow and set it in its place, and then, advancing a few steps, he drew it to its head and let it fly.

The arrow shot had been an excellent one, for the arrow had reached the top of the cliff, and fallen so near where the eagle stood as to cause him to move; but its force had been so far spent that it would have been harmless had it hit him.

Upon this Thorwald took the bow and tried in turn.

His arrow went as high as the earl's had done, and perhaps higher, but it went wide of the mark.

With an exclamation of impatience he took another arrow, and made a second attempt.

This time he drew the shaft full to the head, but the effort required to do it destroyed his aim, and the shot was worse than the other.

"Come, Aldred," said Atholbane; "Donald has more arrows. You must take your turn."

"And you shall see a noble shot, too," cried Douglas. "I have seen the lad handle the long-bow."

The Knight of Lanark got down from his saddle and took the bow.

He had seen where the others had failed, and he knew, if the shot could be made, just what was necessary to do it.

He selected an arrow a full span longer than any that had been yet tried, and with a light step he took his place a little farther from the face of the cliff than that which his companions had selected.

The majestic bird, meanwhile, seemed deeply interested in the movements which were going on below.

With steady, confident strength, Aldred drew the feathered shaft against the bow-string, raising it gradually as he did so, and when the line of the mark was reached, the head of the arrow touched the bow, straining the tough wood as it had never been strained before, if the forester were to be believed.

With a sharp, ringing twang, the nicely balanced missile was shot upwards, cleaving the air like a flash—up, up—for a single instant distinguishable as its feather drew a thread-like line of white against the dark face of the cliff, and then lost to sight. In another moment a wild, piercing cry broke the distant air, and the wild eagle leaped far out from his perch and made an effort to spread his wings; but with his broad arms not half opened, he circled out and in, but downward all the time, and at length fell to the ground not a dozen yards from where the party stood, with the barbed head of the arrow buried deep in his bosom.

"The hand that sent that arrow was trained at Lanark," cried Douglas, good-naturedly, yet proudly. "By my faith! 'twas a noble shot!"

Thorwald, when he saw the Knight of Lanark about to draw the bow, looked at Clara Douglas, and he saw that she was breathlessly anxious. And when he saw that the mark had been surely hit, he looked again, and now he found the beautiful face suddenly

radiant with joy. The success of the arrow had been as nothing compared to this. He might have felt a rankling envy of the youthful knight, who had so palpably beaten him in archery, but it was a fire of malignant hatred that flashed from his eyes when he saw where the maiden's sympathy lay.

#### CHAPTER IX.

EARLY in the evening, as Aldred walked alone upon the parapet, he heard a light footfall behind him, and upon turning he beheld Edwin.

"I am glad to have found you alone," said the boy, glancing carefully around.

"What is the matter now, brother?"

"Oh, nothing in particular, good Aldred; only I wanted to see you."

They walked along together, and then the lad continued:

"Do you know what a grand shot you made to-day? It is a noble thing thus to excel in such manly sport," pursued Edwin; "but still it has its drawbacks."

"Ah?"

"Yes, Aldred. It isn't pleasant to have men envy you."

"Speak plainly, Edwin."

"Then," returned the lad, stopping, and laying his hand upon his companion's arm, "I want to tell you to beware of Thorwald."

"Ah! Is there anything new?"

"I saw to-day what you may not have seen," continued the youth, earnestly. "He is not only envious of you, but he hates you."

The Knight of Lanark drew back a pace, and gazed into the face of the young heir. If he had thought to find any trace of envy or jealousy there he was disappointed. The shades of evening had not gathered so thickly but that the lines of the thin, pale face could be plainly seen, and the boyish features wore the same expression of childlike trust and confidence that had marked them on other occasions. Our hero laid his hand upon the lad's shoulder, and there was a tremulous cadence in his voice as he said:

"Edwin, you are the only one who has the right to be jealous in such a cause."

"I jealous?" cried the boy.

"Aye—you!"

Edwin of Kenmore took the hand of the knight from his shoulder and held it within his own, and when he spoke his voice was low and earnest, and tunelessly sweet and pathetic:

"Aldred, I will tell you a truth which I would not yet tell even to my father. I love Clara Douglas; but not with a love that could beget jealousy. Though our years are the same, I am a child, and she is a woman. I love her as if she were my sister—my kind, gentle, and affectionate sister. When I think of offering myself as the husband of such a woman I shrink as I would shrink from bearing upon my brow the jewelled crown of an empire."

"I shall never be jealous of you," repeated Edwin, with strange emphasis. And presently he went on, "I am not blind. I think I have told you that I read what is written upon the human face quite readily. Shall I tell you what I have read in my cousin's face?"

"You could tell me what you think it is proper I should know."

"By my soul," cried the boy, vehemently, "I know not why I should fear to speak. If there be right on earth, then you should have what heaven has given to you. The right of heaven is above the right of human will."

Edwin ceased speaking, and walked slowly towards the edge of the parapet. He stopped there a few moments, looking over into the moat below, and when he came back he again took his companion's hand. His voice, as he spoke, was lower than before.

"Dear Aldred, you have been more than a brother to me. Only a few short days have elapsed since first I knew you, and yet it seems as though you had been with me for years. If you had not saved my life—if we had met under ordinary circumstances—I am sure I should have loved you all the same; and, feeling thus, I am led to give you my whole confidence—to speak to you words that I would not dare speak to another. You do not know—my father does not know—how much I suffer, nor do I tire my mother with the story. My father talks to me hopelessly, and tells me that I shall be stronger and better. So I may be—so I must be—but not here. Earthly vigour I shall never know. I shall not long remain here. Stop! do not interrupt me. I know of what I speak. Day by day I feel the current of my life failing, failing, failing, and I know that, ere long, the tide will stop. Aldred, I shall never see the snows of another winter. When they come they will rest as a shroud upon my grave. And yet the assur-

ance does not give me pain, though all things are not as I could wish."

"Edwin!"

"Hush! I know her secret. She loves you with a love that no power of earth can ever overcome. Her whole heart is yours; and were this wide world all in one vast empire, and you the master of its throne, she could not feel more pride in her love than she feels now. If she were my own sister, I should not wish to see her become the wife of a man like Thorwald, and can I rest content with the fear upon me that the dark son of Eric may yet possess her? Oh, Aldred, he will work very hard, and he is capable of working wickedly. Already, I am sure, he has discovered her love for you, and he cannot help knowing that you love her. If it were in my power, how gladly would I relinquish the fair charge to you. My brother, I need counsel very much. What can I do?"

The stout knight drew the boy to his bosom and held him there as he would have held a child.

"Say no more now, Edwin. My heart is too full."

"But," urged the lad, looking up, without unloosing the arms that entwined him, "have I not spoken truly?"

"Yes, Edwin; and it was the love that had grown up between us that sent me from Lanark. But as heaven is my judge, I would not have interposed between thee and thine affianced. I would not have done so willingly."

"Hush!" whispered Edwin, "someone is coming towards us. Aldred, I must leave you here."

And with these words the boy hurried away, and was quickly lost in the gloom.

Before the knight had opportunity to reflect upon the strange scene which had just passed, a female figure appeared to his view, approaching from the direction of the keep. She stopped when she saw him, and made a motion as though she would retire; but Aldred could not permit this.

"Lady," he said, taking a step towards her.

"I thought Edwin was here," she responded.

"Edwin was here, but he left when he knew that you were coming. Clara, he left me that you might find me alone."

The words were spoken softly, tenderly, and entreatingly, and without farther reserve the maiden advanced, and extended her hand.

"Aldred," she cried, seeking no longer to hide the emotions that had birth in the depth of her beating heart, "before heaven, I mean no wrong, and I think I do none."

"My life, my light, my only joy," answered Aldred, drawing the beautiful girl nearer to him, and pressing her hand to his lips. "Before high heaven I have a right to love you now."

"Aldred," she said, looking up as she spoke, "it is not wrong. You have seen Edwin?"

"Yes, sweet love."

"And he has told you—"

"My life! he has told me all. Aye, and more, too, for he has led me to hopes that I never dared to entertain. He has told me that he should never claim you for his wife."

"Generous boy!" murmured Clara, softly and sadly. "I love him dearly, he is so good and true, but I never felt other than a sister's love, and he, it seems, would claim no other love. I never saw him so entirely happy and grateful as he was when I assured him that I should always love him."

"Heaven bless him!" ejaculated Aldred, fervently. "Dear Clara, we must not remain long here together, but before we separate there is one important thing which we should understand. Has he told you what might be the wish of your father in the event of the failure of your marriage with him?"

"Oh, Aldred, there was no need that he should tell me that. Already does Thorwald approach me with a lover's look, and more than once have I seen him regard you with the fiery glance of jealous hatred. Oh, Aldred, it seems hard—it seems almost wicked—to speak of what may be in the event of Edwin's death!"

"And yet," added the knight, "it is upon the probability of such an event that we are to base the line of our future conduct. But let us say no more of that now. Generous, noble boy! May he live to enjoy much of life! Let us understand only one thing. Let what will come, you cannot be the wife of Thorwald."

"Never, Aldred!"

"And," pursued our hero, earnestly, "if the time come when your father and Atholbane would make you the wife of Thorwald, you will turn to me for hope and succour?"

"Yes," answered Clara, eagerly.

"Then, sweet love, we have the end in view. We understand each other perfectly, and from this hour the bright star of promise leads me on."

And when Aldred would have again raised her



hand to his lips she turned her face towards him, and, with throbbing heart and flushing tenderness, she gave him the first warm kiss of love that had ever set its holy seal upon their unspoken vows.

"I must go now, Aldred. I may be missed."

"Go: and may the richest blessings of heaven go with you!"

She had turned to depart when a footfall close at hand caused them both to start with alarm.

"We are betrayed!" cried the frightened maiden.

Aldred had put forth his arm to protect his love, when he recognized the fragile form of Edwin.

"Don't be alarmed," spoke the boy, advancing towards them. "I meant not to disturb you."

"You have not, dear cousin," replied Clara. "I was upon the point of returning to the keep when I heard your step. Good, kind Edwin!" added Clara, as she gave him her hand. "I am glad you have come."

The cousins walked away together, and in a very few moments after they had disappeared towards the keep Aldred heard footsteps approaching from the opposite direction. They were stealthy, creeping steps. Not caring to meet anyone at that time, and especially unwilling to meet the person whom he believed was coming, he moved back within the shadow of a tangled vine that crept up the wall of the tower.

"By Saint Michael!" muttered the dark son of Eric, after looking up and down the parapet, "I think the lady came this way; and she must have made a long stay of it. If I had taken the other course I might have met her. Have a care, my pretty bird! If you make too free with the base-born hireling of Lanark it shall be the worse for him!"

Thorwald ground his heel into the turf as he spoke, and a fierce oath made a finish of his sentence.

"The course before me is very plain now," said Aldred to himself, as he stepped out from behind the vine. "Still," he added, as he turned down into the court, "I had better keep my eyes open. I have too much at stake to be careless after this."

When our hero reached the keep he found the two earls engaged in marking out a programme for the approaching tournament.

"Good Aldred," said Atholbane, with a cheerful smile, "we shall have a grand display of arms next week. You will have an opportunity to measure swords and try lances with the best knights of the two kingdoms."

"I shall try that my bearing may reflect credit upon him who educated me," replied our hero, modestly.

"Well spoken," cried Douglas, approvingly. "I shall not fear for the reputation of Lanark. Homer, the stout earl of Northumberland, is to oppose me, and I shall take you upon my side."

Aldred bowed in acquiescence.

"And now," said Atholbane, addressing the youth, "would it please you to accompany good Douglas to Scone to-morrow? He goes to see the king, and would like that you should go with him."

Aldred was both willing and anxious to go, and arrangements were made accordingly.

## CHAPTER X.

"MOTHER, do you believe in ghosts?"

Earl Douglas and Aldred had gone to Scone. Atholbane was on the plain outside the castle, superintending the preparations for the tournament, and Thorwald and his mother were alone in one of the small drawing-rooms.

Lady Margaret looked up with a startled expression.

"Why do you ask that question, my son?"

"Because I want to know what you think about it."

The countess seated herself, and after regarding the questioner for some moments, she said:

"What is it? Has anything new transpired?"

"Nothing new, mother; you know what Aldred professes to have seen."

"I have heard," replied the lady, with a shudder.

"He claims that he has seen a ghost in the blue chamber," pursued Thorwald, taking a seat near to his mother; "and he also asserts that it is the spirit of the woman who was Countess of Kenmore before you."

"I have heard so," returned Lady Margaret, turning pale.

"Now," said the son, "I think there is room for doubt and suspicion here."

The countess shook her head.

"I fear it is a vain hope, my son. With my own eyes I have seen sights in that old tower which were not of human origin."

"But," urged Thorwald, "did you ever see the face which this Knight of Lanark professes to have seen?"

"No."

"Do you believe he has seen it?"

"Thorwald?"

"I ask you—do you believe he has seen it?"

"Surely, my son, I cannot tell. It is not impossible."

"And yet you, to whom all the ghosts of the tower have had opportunity to show themselves, have never seen it. Do you think the earl has seen it?"

"I think he has," answered the countess, slowly and tremulously. The quiver of her voice, however, was not indicative of quiet sorrow, but rather of a jealous pang. "But," she added, in quicker tones, "he has never directly told me so."

"Ah, mother," cried Thorwald, moving his chair nearer to her, "I know your secret. You think the earl has seen the ghost of his first wife, and that he has not loved you so well since."

A smile, faint and sinister, wreathed the compressed lips as Lady Margaret replied:

"Atholbane had no love to lose. He never loved me as he loved Maude of Perth. He made me his wife so that he might raise up an heir to Kenmore."

"And a precious work he has made of it!" exclaimed the knight, derisively. "A most marvellous heir is Edwin!"

"Hush, Thorwald. Edwin is my child!"

"But he is not your only child, nor is he your first-born. And, moreover, he came of a father who never gave you a husband's love. Did the Norman Eric love you?"

"Yes, passionately."

"Then," cried Thorwald, in vehement tones, "which of the two sons do you love best?"

"I love Eric's son best," was the answer.

"And would you not prefer that Eric's son would be the husband of Clara Douglas?"

"I cannot deny it."

"And now," continued the knight, with a change of flashing of the eyes, "we arrive at the point where we may look for real trouble. What think you of this upstart of Lanark? My fair cousin does not dislike this adventurer. In fact, I believe she loves him. I think they were together last evening."

"Ha!" cried the countess, with a start. "Is it so?"

"I think it is. And now," added Thorwald, with flashing eye, and at the same time smiting his fist upon his knee, "I'll tell you one thing more that I think—I think your husband loves Aldred of Lanark better than he loves you."

The countess was silent only for a moment, and then she answered:

"I cannot divest myself of the fear that Aldred stands in the way. I like him not. I see danger in his shadow. If Edwin becomes the husband of my brother's daughter, it is not impossible that Atholbane may favour the suit of this base-born wail."

"Enough!" cried Thorwald. "Leave the Knight of Lanark with me. Ere many days I shall have opportunity to meet him fairly in the lists."

"Beware, my son. Aldred is not a boy. A Douglas gave him training."

"Pshaw! he will be as a boy in my hands. Sdeath! do you imagine that he can hold a place against me? By Saint Michael, I am good for a score of such opponents. But enough of him. I will care for him when the time comes. And now to this ghost. Have any spirits of the old tower ever done harm to mortal man?"

"Not that I know of," replied the countess.

"Then I shall keep watch in the blue chamber to-night. Aldred is away, and I will have a look at the immaterial woman he speaks of. If he is designingly working upon the earl's fears and fancies, I will expose him. At all events, I am determined to know what he means. If the spirit or ghost of Maude of Perth appears to him it will appear to me! Bah! I have no faith in it!"

Though Margaret's belief in the reality of the ghostly visitations had been firm, and though nothing could have induced her to spend a night in the haunted tower, yet she was well pleased that Thorwald had resolved to try the experiment.

"If your nerves are strong," she said, "and you are proof against the effect of terror, I think there can be no danger."

"I have no fears," persisted Thorwald, "and on the morrow I will tell you the result."

With this the knight arose and left the apartment.

The afternoon was warm and sultry, but towards night big clouds showed themselves over the summit of Ben Lavers, and as the sun went down the wind arose, and a storm of rain set in.

As the evening advanced the storm increased, until the mountains fairly cracked beneath the shock of the heavy thunder, and when the lightning flashed both heaven and earth seemed ablaze.

Thorwald had planned that he would watch alone in the Ghost's Tower, but when he went into the western corridor and heard the rain beat against the wall, and the wind howl around the towers and bartizans, he thought it would be more comfortable to

have a companion, and to this end he sought his esquire.

This esquire, or body servant, was a Saxon named Griffith—a broad-shouldered, thick-headed, pugna-cious fellow, some forty years of age—bold enough in a fight when his temper was aroused, and faithful to his master while it was for his interest so to be.

To this man Thorwald proposed the plan he had conceived since the storm came on.

"Of course I have no fear," he explained; "but company would make it more agreeable on such a night, and, moreover, two can watch better than one."

Thorwald could not have found a more willing man. Griffith was not only willing, but he was anxious to go. He declared that he had long desired an opportunity to spend a night in that tower. He had heard a great deal about ghosts, and he had a strong wish to see one.

So, after the rest of the household had retired, Thorwald and his esquire, the former carrying a lantern, and the latter an unlighted lamp and a basket containing several bottles of wine, made their way towards the western tower. They reached the large bed-chamber without trouble, where they deposited the basket and lighted the large lamp, after which they went into the blue chamber.

"This is the place where the ghosts generally congregate," said Thorwald.

"It's a kind of ghostly-looking place, any way," responded Griffith, looking round upon the sombre tapestry.

As he spoke, a vivid flash of lightning set the room ablaze, and in a moment more the thunder fell with a clap that shook the walls of the old tower till the stones seemed ready to tumble. The pugna-cious esquire, who was never afraid of lightning and thunder before, cringed and trembled now.

"Gad zounds!" he gasped. "I never heard anything like that."

"That's nothing," said Thorwald. "The lightning is just as sharp, and the thunder as loud elsewhere as it is here."

"Of course it is," assented the Saxon, laughing a cadaverous laugh. And he fancied that he had shaken off the momentary terror. "But it is a gloomy old room though, isn't it?"

"I call it a very pleasant room," replied the knight. "But how is it about those old murdered monks?" demanded Griffith. "I suppose any of them will come that may happen to take a notion."

"Pshaw! That's all nonsense," asserted Thorwald. "What would those old fellows be doing—"

"Ha!—What's that?"

It was the esquire who uttered the exclamation: and as he did so he started back towards the door of the bed-chamber.

"That was only the moaning of the wind," said Thorwald.

"But I heard a footstep."

"It is nothing. Mercy! just think of the howl of the storm, and remember how many sounds, in such a place as this, may arise from that cause. I trust that your resolution has not deserted you so soon."

"No," returned the Saxon, shaking himself; "I am not afraid.—Heavens!—"

A stream of lightning set the air on fire, and the bolt that exploded shook the old walls till they quivered to their very foundations.

"I tell you, my master," howled the esquire, as soon as he could command his speech, "this lightning and thunder is not the work of nature. Whoever heard the like before?"

The timidity of his attendant served to give the knight control over himself, and he laughed derisively.

"Griffith, your senses are leaving you. What do you suppose have ghosts to do with the lightning? Bah! Don't be a child! Courage, man! Let us go into the other room and get the wine, and then we'll take our places for the watch."

They went into the bed-chamber, where the esquire almost emptied one bottle at a single draught; and as the generous influence thereof mounted to his brain he became quite bold and defiant.

"Come, Griffith, bring along the basket, and we will find a comfortable place in the other room."

"All right," responded Griffith, lifting the basket and moving forward. "If there are any ghosts about to-night, I hope they'll show themselves. Of course I couldn't fancy the idea of having these walls tumble about our heads by the lightning; but I don't think I should be afraid of all the ghosts in Scotland. Whoever heard of a ghost hurting anybody?"

"The very question I have asked myself a thousand times," added Thorwald. "Just think of it. That young braggadocio of Lanark occupies these apartments night after night. Bah; shall we tremble where he chooses to walk?"

"I don't think we shall, my master. But has he seen any ghosts?"

"He says he has; but he may be lying. He may tell that story in order that he may keep the best apartments of the castle. We'll see whether he tells the truth or not."

Thorwald's speech was cut short by a stream of lightning, that for the moment completely blinded him, and the crash of thunder that followed was terrific. As the last echo died away among the distant mountains the light of the lamp, which stood upon a ledge of the altar, grew pale, and presently a ghastly glare pervaded the apartment. Then a deep groan, as of someone in torment, greeted the ears of the watchers; and directly afterwards a wild peal of demoniac laughter broke upon the air.

With hair erect, and eyes starting from their sockets, Griffith raised his trembling hand, and as Thorwald followed the direction indicated, he beheld the figure of an old man, clad in a monkish costume, standing near the centre of the apartment. The face was horrible to look upon, and from a frightful gash in the forehead a stream of blood was trickling down the sunken cheek. Slowly the awful presence raised its bony hand and, in hollow, sepulchral tones, pronounced:

"Son of Eric, what would'st thou?"

Thorwald had no power of speech; nor had he the power of motion; but, fixed in his seat—as though held there by a hand of iron, he could only gaze upon the horrible spectre in silent terror.

The Saxon had crouched down behind the altar, and covered his eyes with his hands.

Another wild, screeching laugh broke through the air—not from the lips of the bleeding monk, but from a source unseen—and then the presence spoke again:

"You have sought me, and you have found me. Henceforth I will be with you when ye wot not. Look to thyself, son of Eric, and be sure there is a just God in heaven."

As the voice ceased a howling wind filled the apartment; the lamp was extinguished; the ghastly glare went out; another wild laugh, with which were mingled groans and screeches most horrible, followed; the old oaken chairs, as though gifted with the power of motion, rattled against each other, until they were really hurled upon the watchers, striking them down with their faces to the floor. Then all was hushed, save the mournful howling of the storm, and the rushing of the cold, damp wind that still filled the apartment.

(To be continued.)

## FACETIÆ.

WHY are washerwomen the silliest of people? Because they put out their tubs to catch soft water when it rains hard.

ON a child being told that he must be broken of a bad habit, he naively replied, "Papa, hadn't I better be mended?"

UNSOCIAL old Snarl says that love is a combination of diseases—an affection of the heart and an inflammation of the brain.

WATER isn't a fashionable beverage for drinking your friend's health; but it's a capital one for drinking your own.

A MAN who advertised lodgings "to let for early risers," adds—"Cochin China fowls of unusual vocal powers are kept on the adjoining premises."

YEARS are the sum of hours. Vain is it at wide intervals to say, "I'll save this year," if at each narrow interval you do not say, "I'll save this hour."

"CAN you tell me my best way to get to Vauxhall Bridge?" said a pedestrian to a cabman, in the Edgware Road. "Take a cab, sir," was the instant and witty reply.

"HAVE you no shame, sir?" "No, neither of us has any; you, because you have no sense of shame; and I, because I never do anything to be ashamed of."

A PROMISING PUPIL.—Lady Harley, writing to a friend in 1686, speaks of Ned Smith, Lord Conway's little son, as a fine child, very strong and witty. "Learns space, and forgets as fast."

A GENTLEMAN met a half-witted lad on the road, and placing in one of his hands a sixpence and a penny, asked him which of the two he would choose. The lad replied he would not be greedy; he'd take the smallest.

LADY COWLEY made Count Baccocchi a present of a cockatoo, a splendid bird, with a faint tinge of rose colour on its head and breast and of yellow on the wing and tail feathers, its eyes of the correct ash colour, and of a mild and most amiable disposition. This cockatoo not only chattered all day long, but listened to what was said, and constantly repeated phrases he

heard spoken. The count's valet was one Nicolas. The bird acquired the habit of calling the servant, and also of saying "Vive l'Empereur!" which he had been taught. During the Crimean war the Emperor and a numerous suite happened to pay a visit to his cousin. The bird, probably excited by the brilliant colours of the uniforms and by the unusual stir in the salon, determined to display his learning, and accordingly shrieked forth his whole repertoire. In vain his master tried to silence him, talk he would; the Emperor, excessively amused, went up to his cage. The cockatoo paused for a moment, then eyeing him with a knowing wink, shouted "Vive l'Empereur—Nicolas!"

### A MODEL TESTOTALLER.

A gentleman in the West Indies, who had frequently promised his friends to leave off drinking, without their discovering any improvement, was one morning called on early by an intimate friend, who met his negro boy at the door.

"Well, Sambo," said he, "where's your master?"

"Massa's gone out, sah," was the reply.

"And has he left off drinking yet?" rejoined the first.

"Oh, yes, sah," said Sambo, "massa leave off drinking; he leave off two, tree time dis morning."

"Oh, she was a jewel of a wife!" says Pat, mourning over the loss of his better half; "she always struck me with the soft end of the mop!"

A LADY excused her extreme love for diamonds and other precious stones by saying, "They are the only bright things which never fade on earth."

THE last case of indolence related is that of a man named John Hole, who was so lazy that, in writing his name, he simply used the letter J., and then punched a hole through the paper.

WHEN one of the old St. James's Street clubs wished to get rid of a member, they met, broke up the club, and immediately reconstructed it without him. A proprietary club in Lincoln's Inn Fields, wishing to get rid of the notorious Q. P. Clifford, resorted to this expedient. "Very well, gentlemen," was his remark, "you have all retired from the partnership. I am the sole surviving partner, and the house and furniture belong to me." He proved it to be legally right, and it cost them several thousand pounds to buy him out.

ILLE-LY PROBABLE.—The Grocer speaks of the oil districts of Flint. Surely procuring oil from Flint is analogous to a process long believed to be impossible—the getting of blood from a stone!—*Fun.*

THE HEAD AND FRONT OF THEIR OFFENDING.—The huge busts that used to decorate the pillars in front of the Sheldonian Theatre, at Oxford, have been removed. It is reported that this is done because they were unsafe, but we understand that the real reason is that the Dons feel that they virtually lost their heads when they rejected Gladstone.—*Fun.*

### MENTAL ARITHMETIC.

Sister:—Look here, Charlie—supposing you had twenty sugar plums, and you wanted to divide them into four parts. You give five to baby and five to Carrie—now what would you do with the other ten?

Sweet Child:—"Suck 'em."—*Fun.*

EGGS-ACTLY.—"One sees so many shops in London," said Mrs. Smith, the other day, "where they profess to sell new-laid eggs, that the supply must be enormous. Do you think, Mr. Jones, that all these new-laid eggs really are what they are represented to be?" "Osten(d)sibly, madam!" was Jones's apt reply.—*Fun.*

### NUKINS'S JUSTICE.

Learned Magistrate:—"Hear the evidence for the defence? Nonsense! I won't hear a word of it! What's the use?—I could not think of doubting a policeman's word."—*Fun.*

NOTHING NEW.—In his inaugural address to the British Association Mr. Grove mentioned a fact which our worthy contemporary the *Builder* thinks might be made practically useful. Mr. Grove stated that atmospheric air drawn through films of india-rubber leaves behind it half its nitrogen, or in other words becomes richer by half in oxygen. It is proposed to make use of this discovery to oxygenate the air supplied in factories and other crowded buildings. The idea seems novel, but there is nothing new under the sun, and we need only remind our readers that Mrs. Glasse long ago reminded people to "first cautch (oue) your 'air.'"—*Fun.*

THE UTILIZATION OF BRIBERY.—It is a point of wisdom to make the best of a bad bargain. The sale and purchase of a vote may be regarded as a bargain of that description. If seats in Parliament must needs be bought and sold, the country at large may as well have the benefit of the transaction. Instead of altogether disfranchising electors who sell

their votes, might not the Legislature authorize the Chancellor of the Exchequer to dispose of corrupt constituencies to the highest bidder? By this arrangement the country would at least be enabled to know better than it now does how many members of the House of Commons are the representatives of mere money.—*Punch.*

### SHAFTESBURY ON SWEETS.

THE Earl of Shaftesbury, in the address delivered by him to the Social Science Congress at Manchester, said:

"When England, a few years ago, took a high and noble tone in denouncing American slavery, an accomplished and zealous lady of the Southern States, alluding, in a tale called 'Tit for Tat,' to the wretched chimney-sweepers, upbraided us with our hypocrisy that, while we had so much sympathy with the blacks, we had none whatever for our own white children."

The remark thus quoted by the noble lord suggests a somewhat interesting inquiry, namely, whether our chimney-sweepers are white or black. Perhaps they may be said to be white and black also; thus proving that under certain conditions black is white and white is black. The discussion of this question might have, perhaps, not unprofitably occupied the time and attention of the Congress for the Advancement of Social Science.—*Punch.*

### THE SPECIALITIES OF YARMOUTH.

Great Yarmouth is a place that's famed for bloaters. But rendered infamous by vocal voters.—*Punch.*

TELEGRAMS FROM LEICESTER SQUARE.—The Statue has sent a petition to the Government to take the horse away and accommodate him with a perambulator.—*Punch.*

AN ATTY NOTHING.—To "A Young Astronomer" who asks our advice as to the best method of observing the stars, we reply—"Go to Devonshire, for there you may with advantage study the Cidereal System."—*Punch.*

## SCIENCE.

ANOTHER needle-gun has been invented in Barcelona. It is asserted that any soldier will be able to fire twelve times with only once taking aim.

OVER 3,500 little ducts have been found to exist in a single square inch of the skin of the palm of the hand. About 60 ft. would represent the average length of those ducts for a single square inch of skin for the whole body.

ESTIMATE the yard of gold at £2,000,000, which it is in round numbers, and all the recovered gold in the world might, if melted into ingots, be contained in a cellar twenty-four feet square and sixteen feet high.

UPWARDS of 2,000 tons of carbonate of ammonia are annually made from gas liquor alone. Of sal-ammoniac more than 4,000 tons, and also about 5,000 tons of sulphate of ammonia, are yearly produced from the same source.

THE splendour of the solar light is more than 300,000 times that of the full moon: in other words, if the armament were paved with 300,000 full moons, their united splendour would be inferior to that of the sun.

ACCORDING to the energy of the battery employed, it is found that the electric light varies from the fifth part to the fourth of that of the sun; or in other words, it is equivalent to that diffused from a number of wax candles varying from 3,000 to 5,750.

DR. LARDNER says:—"If the materials that form the globe were built up in the form of a column having a pedestal of the magnitude of England and Wales, the height of the column would be nearly four and a half millions of millions of miles."

THE Montreal *Gazette* states, on the authority of an experienced marksmen, who has repeatedly practised with breech-loaders, that the grease is liable to clog the metallic cartridge on cold mornings, and seriously affect the efficiency of the weapon, making it comparatively useless.

PETROLEUM FORMED FROM SEAWEED.—This theory of the formation of rock-oil has been advanced by Prof. Wilbur. His idea is that petroleum has had its source in marine vegetation, just as coal has been derived from terrestrial plants. Few persons have an adequate idea of the immense growth of seaweed in the depths of the ocean. After their term of growth was completed they became detached, floated off, and finally sank to the bottom. It is a received opinion among geologists that this portion of the North American continent had once been the bed of a salt-water ocean. The ocean floor, as must be remembered, was not level, but had, throughout its whole extent, deep hollows and ridges. It was, of course, in



these deep hollows that the seaweed deposits would find their last resting-place, after long tossing about in the waves and ocean currents. In this way it would come to pass that they would not be evenly distributed over the bottom, but only in those hollows or pockets. Meanwhile the deposit of solid stratified rock, or what afterwards became such, was going on, and after untold ages these masses of seaweed became covered to various depths. He considered it no very unreasonable or unscientific supposition that these masses of oily, carbonaceous matter should, under the circumstances, take the form of oil, of a liquid hydro-carbon.

THERE are 1,000 telegraphic offices in Europe. Africa is connected with the Continent by two lines. Egypt and India have each two routes. The latter contains 161 stations; the island of Ceylon has four more. Despatches for China pass through Russia, thence to the frontier towns of Tartary, where, received by horsemen, they are delivered through the empire, reaching Peking.

THE amount of common salt in all the oceans is estimated by Schaffhaut at 3,051,342 cubic geographical miles, or about five times more than the mass of the Alps, and only one-third less than that of the Himalayas. The sulphate of soda equals 633,644.36 cubic miles, or is equal to the mass of the Alps; the chloride of magnesium, 441,811.80 cubic miles; and the lime salts, 109,339.44 cubic miles.

IN fifty-five days from the 28th July to the 21st of September the Atlantic Cable earned £46,048, which would make an average, including Sundays and stoppages of the land lines, of £837 per day. Excluding the exceptional day, when the cable could not work at all, the average would be £960 a day. The largest sum taken in one day was £2,008. As many as fifteen words a minute are now transmitted, and occasionally twenty words per minute have been forwarded.

ASTRONOMICAL observers of the sun will be interested to know that M. L. Foucault has discovered a method of diminishing the effect of the sun's rays on the focus of telescope lenses. By means of an extremely thin layer of silver placed on the object-glass, the sun can be observed without any injury to the sight. M. Foucault has communicated the particulars of his invention to the Paris Academy of Sciences.

GOVERNMENT has ordered one of the 15 in. Rodman guns, with improved carriage, shot, and powder, from the United States. This is a great step in the right direction. It would be obviously premature and even dangerous to come to an absolute decision on the question of guns and projectiles whilst we are still so completely in the dark as to the merits of the American system. The gun is likely to arrive in this country in six, or seven weeks. It is strange that the late Government never thought of so practical a mode of settling the question between British and American ordnance.

A NEW MAGNESIUM LAMP.—Mr. H. Larkin has exhibited a new patent magnesium lamp, which photographers will very gladly welcome, inasmuch as those now in the market are not so satisfactory as it is desirable they should be. The distinguishing peculiarity of the new lamp is, that it burns the metal in the form of powder instead of ribbon or wire; and its chief advantage is, that it renders the unsatisfactory clockwork arrangement hitherto used unnecessary. A large reservoir holds the powder, which falls by its own gravity, like sand in the hour-glass. To insure its burning with a steady, continuous flame, fine sand is mixed with the metal in quantity proportioned to the strength or size of the flame desired. After leaving the reservoir, the stream of mingled sand and magnesium flows through a metal tube, into the upper end of which is introduced a small jet of ordinary gas, which being turned on, is lighted, and then these mingled streams escaping from the mouth of the tube together, burn with a powerful light so long as the magnesium lasts. The fumes are conveyed away through a chimney, and at the same time the sand falls harmlessly into a receptacle provided for it. The flow of the inflammable material may be either regulated or arrested by the opening or closing of a valve. The cost of burning this lamp is said to be about twenty shillings an hour.

THE father of the Marquis de Boissy was very rich and very eccentric. In the Senate he spoke but seldom, unlike his son, but what he said was caustic and to the purpose. His last appearance in the Chamber of Peers was once after 1830 to vote for the acquittal of the Ministers of Charles X., who were impeached for issuing the celebrated ordinances which led to the Revolution. The marquis had a mania for bringing water into his estate. He consulted the most eminent engineers, who, at an enormous expense, succeeded in creating a pond or basin, in which the water was twelve feet deep. He was delighted beyond measure at being told one day that a man had been nearly drowned in his basin. The writer of this anecdote ex-

presses his belief that if anyone had brought news to the marquis that a man had been really drowned he would have bestowed half his fortune on the bearer of the glad tidings. His horses were sorry Rosinantes. He had five or six carriages, and a judgment may be formed of his equipage from an opinion he often expressed that no one ought to pay more than 300*l.* (or 12*l.*) for a horse. He would not, like Richard the Third, give "a kingdom for a horse." In the morning the marquis walked round his grounds, and beggars assembled to greet him. "Go and work," said he to them one day; "surely that would be better than to importune and annoy me." The beggars did not stir. Turning to his old valet, who accompanied him in his walks, with a bag of money, he said, "Pierre, if the poor wretches won't go away, give them each a louis (20*l.*), but, above all, let them go and work."

#### ONE HEART IS MINE.

Now, as I travel o'er the earth,  
They'll think me mad, I show such mirth;  
But what care I for all their thought,  
If, in my love, they are untaught?  
The elements may cloud or shine,  
For one true heart, I know, is mine!  
Come on, come all ye ills of life,  
I boldly venture in the strife;  
With all your spleen I dare you now  
To cast a shade upon my brow;  
Your evil forces may combine,  
For one true heart, I know, is mine!  
Speak not of woe or grief to me,  
One gloomy spot I cannot see;  
Love reigns within, around me, too,  
And all is brightened to my view;  
The elements may reign or shine,  
For one true heart, I know, is mine;  
Now cares before me swiftly flee,  
From every doubt my heart is free;  
If trials come with hastening feet,  
Why, those I cannot crush I'll meet;  
Their evil forces may combine,  
For one true heart, I know, is mine!

G. H.

#### GEMS.

A WHITE face is sometimes disguised as a black one, but a black soul much oftener as a white one.

If you wish that your own merits should be recognized, recognize the merits of others.

WHAT ought to be done to-day do it—for to-morrow it may rain.

If you wish to know how an associate speaks of you to others, mark how he speaks of them to you.

How much more might people accomplish if they would make a point to carry out whatever they undertake.

THESE six—the peevish, the niggardly, the dissatisfied, the passionate, the suspicious, and the man who lives upon other's means—are for ever unhappy.

THE more honesty a man has, the less he affects the air of a saint; the affection of sanctity is a blot on the face of piety.

THOSE who build hopes on the promises of the great, build castles in the air; those who promise themselves gratitude for such, reckon without their host.

MISERY assails riches, as lightning does the highest towers; or as a tree that is heavily laden with fruit breaks its own boughs, so do riches destroy the virtue of their possessor.

TRUE elevation of mind does not take a being out of the circle of those who are below him, but binds him faster to them, and gives advantages for a closer attachment and conformity to him.

THE FOX.—In Yorkshire there are ten packs of fox-hounds, one pack of stag-hounds, and five or six of harriers, equal in all to thirteen or fourteen packs of fox-hounds. Thirteen packs of fox-hounds of fifty couples each, viz., 1,300 hounds, consume annually 200 tons of oatmeal, at a cost of £2,600, besides the carcasses of about 2,000 dead horses, worth nothing if no hounds were kept. There are at least 1,000 hunting men in Yorkshire, keeping on an average four horses each; 4,000 horses will cost them £200,000 at £50 each, and their keep at £50 per annum each makes £200,000 more; 4,000 horses employ 2,000 men as grooms (generally the offspring of the agricultural population), and consume annually 40,000 quarters of oats, 2,000 quarters of beans, and 3,000 tons of hay and grass. Every tradesman also is benefited by hunting—tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, saddlers, druggists, butchers, bakers, grocers,

brewers, wine-merchants, surgeons, and veterinary surgeons. If fox-hunting were given up where would the farmer find a market for the above produce, or for a well-bred horse four or five years old? Foxes are the farmers' best friends, and they ought to use every exertion to preserve them, and prevent them being stolen, to be sent where masters of hounds are unsportsmanlike enough to purchase them no matter whence they come.

#### HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CLARET CUP.—One pint of claret, one wineglass of brandy, three ditto of sherry, one bottle of soda water, a little paring of cucumber; sugar to taste. After being infused five minutes, strain and put it into the cup; a lump of ice is an improvement.

#### A CURE FOR DELIRIUM TREMENS.

THE greatest difficulty in the treatment of *mania-a-potu* is to procure sleep, which is the indispensable condition of recovery. The desideratum seems to have been secured in Dublin by the use of red pepper. In a case treated by Dr. Lyons, a 60-grain dose made into a large pill was taken without any difficulty. The immediate and sensible effects were a burning sensation in the mouth and throat, and a sense of diffused warmth through the stomach and bowels for a brief period subsequently. In less than an hour after the pill was taken the patient fell into a quiet sleep, and after two or three hours awoke perfectly calm, conscious and convalescent. The results obtained by Dr. Lyons are fully borne out by the experience acquired, on a far larger scale of observation, in the West Indies and in the Melville Hospital, Dublin. In the records of this hospital not less than from 70 to 80 cases are reported to have been successfully treated by the use of this drug, in single or repeated doses, ranging from 20 grains and upwards. No disorder of the stomach, or otherwise unpleasant symptom, has been at any time noticed.

#### MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Civil Service Club and the Clarendon are to be amalgamated.

A RAILWAY train travelling incessantly at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour would require six weeks to go round the earth.

SIR L. PALK has recently presented a piece of ground to the Erith House Institution, Torquay, for ladies of limited means suffering from chest diseases.

DR. BUCKLAND states that Chichester is more liable to earthquakes than any other place in the kingdom, in consequence of its being on the continuation of the Isle of Wight formation.

It is said Count Bismarck is not ill but bad-tempered, on account of the King attributing all the successes to Providence, and ignoring the handiwork of his Minister.

CALIFORNIA is becoming a wool-manufacturing as well as wool-growing country. A company for manufacturing woollen cloths has lately been incorporated at Marysville, and another at Stockton.

THE largest masses of gold ever found were—first, that found at Ballarat, Australia, in 1859, which weighed 224 lbs.; second, that found in Calaveras county, Cal., in 1854, which weighed 195 lbs.

THE aborigines of New Holland regard the firmament more than civilized men would generally suppose. They know the fixed stars by name, and believe them to be other inhabited worlds.

THE Washington elm at Cambridge was some years ago estimated to produce a crop of 7,000,000 of leaves, exposing a surface of 200,000 square feet, or five acres of foliage.

MR. F. BUCKLAND stated at a meeting held at Maidstone, a short time since, that the annual value of the salmon fisheries amounted in Scotland to £500,000; in Ireland to £300,000; but in England to £10,000 only.

THE Emperor has authorized the Minister of the Interior to open a subscription throughout France, in aid of the sufferers from the inundations. The Emperor has headed the list with 100,000*l.*, and is followed by the Empress with 25,000*l.*, and the Prince Imperial with 10,000*l.* This is over and above a first contribution of 35,000*l.* given by the Imperial family.

THE NEW TEA PLANT.—Chemists tell us that the delicious perfume of the new tea plant is attributable to a substance called coumarin, the same, in fact, as the tonka bean possesses in such a powerful degree, and if this be true, we may find the identical active principle in the woodruff, the sweet-scented vernal grass, and the leaves of one of our common orchids; so no doubt some enterprising individuals will make tea of them one of these days.

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A VICTIM OF LOVE must write to us intelligibly.  
BRITOMARTIN.—Be patient and more courteous.  
J. E.—Any courier or leather-dresser will give you the information you seek.  
ROSA.—Apply to the clergyman of your parish; either incumbent or curate will gladly put you in the right path.  
MASTER JULIA.—Take a series of lessons in elocution, which will in all probability effect a cure.  
RENA STELLER, NICHOLAS, A CONSTANT READER, and LITTLE JACK'S communications will be attended to.  
Mc V.—Apply to a chemist for a pink saucer that will serve your purpose.  
ROBERT.—Benzoin is a medical kind of resin, imported from the East Indies, and vulgarly called Benjamin.  
W. B., a mechanic, with good prospects, black hair, and not bad looking. Respondent must be tall and good looking.  
W. C. M.—1. The acid you name may be obtained of any chemist. 2. Apply to an ink manufacturer, who would supply you at a lower cost than you could make it yourself.  
EMILY C.—Marriage licences (not special) are procurable at Doctors' Commons, or of any Surrogate, and cost about 2l. 10s.  
NATALIE.—It is not quite prudent for a young woman to give her carte to one of the opposite sex if he be not a relation or a dear friend.  
B. M., twenty-one, 5 ft. 3 in. in height, and the daughter of a respectable tradesman. Respondent must be a steady, respectable young man; a total abstainer preferred.  
KARINA.—1. Do not tamper with the instrument, but consult a pianoforte manufacturer. 2. Your hair is certainly of more than the ordinary length.  
JAMES, twenty-six, 5 ft. 11 in. in height. Respondent must be from twenty to twenty-five. "James" is very steady, fond of home, and religious.  
DECLINED WITH THANKS—"A Husband's First Lesson," "Military Law," "To Mary," and "Scraps from a Barber's Shop," not being suitable to our columns.  
JAMES SMITH.—Why not apply personally, or by letter, to the address you give? If by letter, your question will be answered by the post office clerk through the returned letter office.  
H. DE LACY, twenty-six, 5 ft. 4 in. in height, fair, dark hair, blue eyes, and holds a situation in a large company in the City. Would like the lady to be from seventeen to twenty, fair, good looking, and even temper.  
WINSOR.—1. There are many such reformatories for girls. Advise the mother to apply to the clergyman of her parish. 2. You can procure coloured hair at almost any toy shop, or the materials to make it from a fire-work manufacturer.  
FORGET-ME-NOT, of agreeable manners, cheerful temper, brown hair and eyes, and thoroughly domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty, tall, dark, gentlemanly, a good temper, and with an income of not less than 150l.  
G. W., thirty-five, 6 ft. in height, gray eyes, full whiskers, good looking, a fair scholar, fond of music, not much money at present, but has been a clerk and ironmonger; would prefer a lady with a little money.  
EPHRAIM, a young physician of good family, desires a wife amiable and accomplished, with an income of about 200l. a year. "Ephraim" is 5 ft. 10 in. in height, dark hair, and considered good looking.  
CARP HARRY B., twenty-one, 5 ft. 10 in. in height, very fair, a good musician, exceedingly powerful and handsome, and can earn a decent income. The lady must be under twenty, very pretty, and have a small income.  
CARRIE SCOTT, tall, dark, blue eyes, small features, the widow of a tradesman, three children, the youngest six. Respondent must be a tradesman or mechanic, in a good position.  
VICTORIA, sixteen, petite, light brown hair, blue eyes, and fair complexion. Respondent must be about thirty, or thirty-five, dark hair and eyes, moderate height, and of any genteel business or profession.  
AGNES and MAGGIE.—"Agnes," eighteen, tall, dark, and a good figure. "Maggie," seventeen, fair, and a good figure. Both are domesticated, and would not object to emigrate to New Zealand.  
M. C., twenty-two, 5 ft. 8 in. in height, light brown hair, blue eyes, dark, bushy whiskers, and good looking, with a salary of 500l. a year, wishes to correspond with a good looking young lady, about 5 ft. 4 in. in height, and of amiable disposition.  
UNHAPPY AMY's case is another illustration that the "course of true love never did run smooth." Poor "Amy" is between a Scylla and Charybdis, personified by her father and lover, both of whom (with a difference) she equally loves. Her father commands her to marry a young man of fortune, who has paid her great attention, but she says, "I would rather die than marry him, and I am likewise deter-

mined to marry the one I love." Thus having stated her determination, "Amy" asks us, "Is it wrong? what shall I do? for I love my father very much, and do not like to leave him, or else I would go away at once with the one I love. He is very well off, and I like his friends very much, but if he had not a penny I should love him just as much." Having stated her determination, while asking our advice, "Amy" has evidently forgotten that—  
"A girl convinced against her will  
Is of the same opinion still."  
Nevertheless, we beg of "Amy" for her own sake to remember that, wanting six months of "sweet sixteen," she has ample time for second thoughts. To marry in haste is to at leisure repent. Let her by no means marry the man she dislikes, for that would be a sin. Be careful, however, "Amy," how you disobey your only parent, for since you confess you love him, grief alone can come of such a course. Our advice then is to wait—you have ample time before you—and if the lover you prefer is worth having, he will endorse our opinion.  
A SILENT SUFFERER.—We have no faith in the person you name, far better apply to a non-advertising medical man, or to the surgeon of the day of the nearest hospital. You would do the latter if you have any real regard for your health.  
EMMA and LOTTIE wish to correspond with two tradesmen between twenty and twenty-four. "Emma" is nineteen, dark hair, and dark hazel eyes. "Lottie," eighteen, has also dark eyes and brown hair. Both are of medium height, well educated, and understand music.  
A STRENGTH.—A tally was a notched stick cut in conformity to another stick. By tally it was that our unlettered ancestors kept their accounts—nay, by certain small tradesmen in the provinces they are even now in use. It was the burning of the National Exchange tallies, which had accumulated for centuries, that caused the destruction, by fire, of the old Houses of Parliament.  
THE DECLARATION.  
"Faith!—Women are riddles!" I muttered one day,  
As I sat by my beautiful Bess;  
"It seems very queer that whatever they say,  
Their meaning no mortal can guess!"  
I knew that she loved me by many a sign  
That served her affection to show;  
But when I suggested, will Betty be mine?  
Confound her!—she answered me "No!"  
'Tis the way with the sex—so I often had heard—  
And thus their ascent they express:  
But I couldn't but think it extremely absurd  
That a "No" was the same as a "Yes!"  
So I asked her again, with my heart in a whirl,  
And said, "Do not answer me so!"  
When twice in succession the mischievous girl  
Repeated that odious "No!"  
"There!" she said, with a laugh, "that is certainly  
plain;  
And your hearing is not over nice,  
Or you wouldn't have forced me to say it again,  
For I think I have spoken it twice!"  
"I see!" I exclaimed, as I clasped in my own  
The hand of my beautiful Bess;  
"I now recollect—what the grammar has shown—  
Two negatives equal a 'Yes!'"  
J. C. S.  
PRAIRIE LILY, seventeen, tall, fair, light brown hair, blue eyes, pretty, fond of music, but with nothing to offer but a kind and loving heart. Respondent must be tall, dark, not over twenty, and fond of home.  
S. M., twenty-seven, 5 ft. 8 in. in height, dark, blue eyes, dark hair, whiskers and moustache, amiable disposition, and a good income. The young lady must be about twenty-one, able to play and sing to the piano, and be suitable for any society.  
UNDINE, eighteen, dark, petite, thoroughly domesticated, good tempered, well educated, a considerable knowledge of French and German, can play, sing, draw, and paint, and also a good ecologist. Respondent must be well educated and resident in London.  
HOPE EVERMORE.—Judging from your communication, your chances of success on the "stage" would be small indeed; a ballet girl's career is not a "path of roses." Take our advice, abandon the intention, for although one in a thousand obtains a success, the nine hundred and ninety-nine gain but a wretched pittance and many heart-burnings.  
SANTA ILDA, eighteen, 5 ft. 6 in. in height, fair, not bad looking, domesticated, with no money, and no lover, would like to correspond with a gentleman in a position to support a wife, not shorter than herself; if dark preferred; has no objection to smoking. He must, however, be of religious principles.  
A SOLDIER.—1. You cannot purchase a lieutenant's commission in the army. Having first passed an examination, you may purchase an ensigncy or cornetcy; after which you must pass another examination before purchasing or being promoted to a lieutenant. The ensigns in the Foot Guards hold the rank of lieutenants in the army. 2. In the artillery, engineers, and marines, there are no ensigns. 3. Apply at the Horse Guards, or at any recruiting-depot.  
EDWARD.—The word wine, derived from the Greek *oinos*, is in the Latin *vinum*, Italian and Spanish *vino*, the Gallic *vin*, Anglo-Saxon *win*, Danish *wyn*, German *wein*, Dutch *wijn*, and Portuguese *vinho*. Of what antiquity is this, the whole world's favourite beverage, may be derived from the fact that Noah's first recorded piece of husbandry is that he "planted a vineyard, drank of the vine, and was drunken." The wine, it is supposed, was first introduced into England by the Romans.  
ZEHRA.—1. It was in May, 1810, that Lord Byron, in emulation of Leander, swam across the Hellespont. The distance, however, being two miles, from the European to the Adriatic side, when he reached the latter, from exhaustion, he was compelled to seek repose in the hut of a Turkish fisherman, where he remained carefully attended by the wife for five days. Upon his departure, his lordship, whose rank and fame were unknown to the Turkish peasants, received a gift of a loaf, some cheese, a skin of wine, and the blessings of Allah. In return, Byron sent the fisherman a few fish, nets, a fowling-piece, and several yards of silk for his wife.

The Turk, overwhelmed with gratitude, resolved to cross the Hellespont to thank his unknown guest, but in the passage his boat was upset, and the poor fellow met with a watery grave. 2. Leander swam the Hellespont to visit his love, the fair Hero—at least, so runs the legend.  
EDMUND, twenty-three, medium height, fair, good looking, moderate means, a pair of willing hands, an honest heart, and an unblemished character. Respondent must not be too dark, nor yet too fair, from nineteen to twenty-one, and one also whose love and sweet smiles would keep him happy through a tedious life.  
A POLITICAL STURGEON.—Under the treaty settled by the representatives of the great powers at the Congress of Vienna, in 1815, and to which we had occasion to refer in our article on the Continental War, the element of constitutional liberty, as developed in Great Britain, was admitted. France, so vastly increased by Napoleon I., was reduced to her former limits; the German States, though separately independent, were united by a federative league; the Austrian Monarchy was re-erected; Prussia was reduced to her limits of 1805; and Hanover was made a kingdom. This treaty is, of course, by the recent success of Prussia, but as waste paper.  
H. M., twenty-nine, 5 ft. 5 in. in height, dark, has travelled nearly all over the world, and has just returned from Egypt, fond of music, knows Latin and Hindostanee, is a professor of legerdemain, and about to introduce to the public of London some new and startling feats in his profession. The lady he would choose for a wife must be under twenty-seven, if short preferred, and with a *trifle of money* to assist him in producing his entertainment with greater effect. A young widow without children not objected to.  
COLOUR OF HAIR.—"Natalie," light brown—"Snow Drop," very light brown.  
HANDWRITING.—"Natalie," very fair—"Puss," promises to be very good when you "grow up."—"L. A.," you require practice and care; it is only bad workmen who complain of their tools—"A. E.," not at all bad for one who has not been taught; nevertheless, take a few lessons.  
COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:—  
CHARLES M. is responded to by—"Edith," eighteen, pretty, and ladylike, but no money.  
LIVELY JACK by—"Merry Nell," twenty, 5 ft. 2 in., fair, dark hair and eyes; Dame Nature has not dealt niggardly with her, as she possesses a fair share of attractions, is slightly inclined to embonpoint; can make a pudding, play the piano, and promises that her husband's shirt shall never be buttonless. "M. N." does not approve of angling for husbands—with a golden bait, but she will have a few hundred—very "Nell," twenty-one, very nice looking, and would try to make him a happy wife; and—"Amy D.," eighteen, medium height, tolerably good looking, neither fair nor dark, brown wavy hair, well educated, understands music, very domesticated, and when of age will have a good fortune.  
OTHELLO by—"Annie," twenty-two, 5 ft. 6 in. in height, rather dark, tolerably good looking, and fond of home; and—"Ellis," twenty, tall, fair, good looking, well educated, and musical, and the daughter of a gentleman farmer.  
A. G. by—"M.," a widow, thirty, who thinks she would make him a suitable partner—"Beatrice," a widow, thirty, dark eyes, black curly hair, medium height, and well educated; and—"E. A. B.," a widow, thirty-two, of respectability and education.  
YOUNG SAXON by—"Annie," twenty-three, dark, medium height, lively disposition, domesticated, and would make an excellent farmer's wife—"Minnie," twenty-four, tall, good figure, brown hair and eyes, and well educated; and—"Flora," nineteen, tall, considered very pretty, light blue eyes, and a loving disposition.  
HEReward by—"Aethra," twenty-three, accomplished, wealthy, and stylish.  
WALTER by—"Lucy," seventeen, 5 ft. 3 in. in height, considered very good looking, dark brown hair, a good set of white teeth, and of a respectable family, but no money.  
WARRICK by—"Emma," forty, tall, dark, with one son, a most amiable, good, and industrious lady.  
OLYBE by—"Annie H. F.," twenty-three, 5 ft. 4 in. in height, neither dark nor fair, considered nice looking; of respectable parents, no fortune, but in a good business, and thoroughly domesticated.  
ALBERT STEELE by—"Minnie Maitland," seventeen, not pretty, large blue eyes, brown hair, very domesticated, and will have a little money on her marriage.  
A. L. L. by—"P. M. A.," of Christian principles, amiable, affectionate, and of good family; not a widow.  
JUVENIA, H. L. by—"Miss L.," seventeen, 5 ft. 2 in. in height, fair, dark eyes, auburn hair, a good set of teeth, thoroughly domesticated, and will have a little money on her father's death.  
A. K. S. by—"Jenny Stanley," nineteen, fair, blue eyes, domesticated, and respectably connected, but no fortune.  
ERNEST by—"Hannah B.," nineteen, medium height, fair, blue eyes, auburn hair, and the daughter of a respectable tradesman, with nothing to offer but a loving heart.  
HARRY B. by—"Beatrice," seventeen, 5 ft. 2 in. in height, slight figure, large dark brown eyes, chestnut hair, small hands and feet, and a slight knowledge of French and German; and—"Eleanora," sixteen, 5 ft. 5 in. in height, fair, large blue eyes, flaxen hair, good figure, and a beautiful hand. Both "Beatrice" and "Eleanora" will have on marriage 400l.  
RICARDO by—"Nelly," nineteen, dark, tall, very pretty, and fond of home; and—"Rose," twenty, fond of home, thoroughly respectable, and will possess a good fortune.

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